The cult series *Max Headroom* and *Anime Saturday* debut in September.

BY ALLISON VILLONE

LEAVES ARE FALLING, temperatures are dropping, it must be time to head back to… the mall. That's right—your friendly neighborhood shopping mall, home to the Sci-Fi Channel's newest enterprise: Sci-Fi Channel corners in Spencer Gifts stores. Forty Spencer Gifts locations in cities such as New York, Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia, Washington, and Seattle now feature Sci-Fi Channel areas where you can buy *Star Trek* and *StarWars* merchandise, grab other science fiction goodies, and even pick up copies of *Sci-Fi Entertainment*. TV monitors showcasing Sci-Fi Channel programming and graphics will be featured in each store. Don't despair if your local Spencer Gifts outlet does not have a Sci-Fi Channel corner; new locations may be added soon. Plus, the Sci-Fi Channel has also teamed up with Spencer Gifts for special Halloween programming and promotions on the air. So visit Spencer Gifts for stuff, and stay tuned to Sci-Fi and plugged into *The Dominion*, the Channel's interactive Internet site on the World Wide Web, for details (http://www.scifi.com).



Beginning as a popular television commercial, Max Headroom was a strange computer personality in the futuristic TV series of the same name. The series re-airs on the Channel beginning in September.

Speaking of The Internet, the Sci-Fi Channel continues its unending quest for the ultimate in on-line interactivity. This past summer, computer users took part in a groundbreaking experiment created by Sci-Fi Channel. As they watched late-night airings of *The Prisoner*, they participated in on-line chat sessions on the computer bulletin board, Echo, and saw their comments about the show graphically inserted on-air, just seconds later, while the episodes played.

This is just one of many opportunities for on-line interaction by Sci-Fi Channel viewers. For six weeks leading up to Labor Day, computer users have been voting for their favorite *Twilight Zone* episodes with an interactive online poll on *The Dominion*. Viewers selected their top thirty shows from a field of a hundred fifty-four. Now you can learn the results when Sci-Fi presents a countdown of our viewers' top choices, from number thirty all the way to the number one favorite. The *Twilight Zone* countdown will air all day Monday, September 4, beginning at 9 AM ET.* And if your idea of interaction involves a remote control and a bowl of popcorn, the new offerings and riveting specials on the Sci-Fi Channel's fall schedule will be just what you're looking for.

The Sci-Fi Channel makes film lovers' dreams comes true with *Anime Saturday*, a new weekly presentation of the best Japanese animated feature films. The Sci-Fi Channel's Saturday cinema showcase will feature an impressive array of film artistry, all demonstrating the creativity of world-class Japanese animators. Movies like *The Venus Wars*, *Casshan: Robot Hunter*, *Vampire Hunter D*, *Lensman* and *Demon City Shinjuku*, all featuring spectacular animation, unpredictable visuals and captivating storylines, will discourage you from sleeping in every Saturday morning, beginning September 30, from 9-11 AM.

New on Sci-Fi: *Max Headroom*, the cult series focusing on Edison Carter, investigative reporter for the fictitious Network 23, and his relationship with Max, his computer-generated alter ego. Matt Frewer and Amanda Pays star. Sci-Fi kicks off *Max Headroom* with an all-day marathon featuring fourteen episodes of the show on Sunday, September 10 beginning at 1 PM. Beginning Saturday, September 30, regularly scheduled airings of *Max Headroom* can be seen Saturdays at 10 PM and 2 AM.

Sci-Fi shrinks and expands in September with a week of movies featuring the tiniest and hugest characters: *Fantastic Voyage*, *Phantom Planet*, *The Amazing Colossal Man*, *War of the Colossal Beast*, and *Dollman*. *Little/Big People Week* airs for five nights the week of Monday, September 18, with films at 9 PM and 1 AM.

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This strange alien inhabitant from The Phantom Planet, *starring Dean Fredericks and Dolores Faith, can be seen as part of* Little/Big Week *in September.*

plays, scores of movies, and millions of nightmares. Now, Dracula is a billionaire power broker, seeking global domination on *Dracula: The Series*, another new entry to the Sci-Fi Channel roster. Beginning Saturday, September 30, *Dracula: The Series* airs Saturdays at 12 PM.

Sci-Fi profiles an innovator of science fiction entertainment when it presents *The Fantasy Worlds of Irwin Allen*, a two-hour retrospective documentary focusing on the creative talent behind such shows as *Lost in Space* and *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea* and films like *The Towering Inferno* and *The Poseidon Adventure*. It can be seen Saturday, September 30 at 8 PM. For additional airings, see schedule.

When the scariest month of the year hits, the Sci-Fi Channel bites back with four full weeks of the greatest horror films ever, from *Dracula* to *The Black Cat* to *Night of the Living Dead*. Movies will be presented each weekday at 9 PM and 1 AM. But that's not all; a Halloween Movie Marathon featuring a full day of horror flicks like *Satan's Triangle* and *The Howling* will air all day Sunday, October 29, beginning at 11:30 AM. See schedule for details.

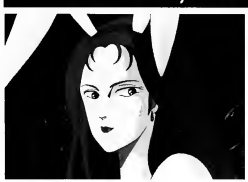
On Columbus Day, Sci-Fi presents a mod minimarathon featuring ten one-hour episodes of *UFO*, the space series with wild clothes and hilarious hairstyles that was way before its time. It will air Monday, October 9 beginning at 9 AM.

Reporter Darren McGavin investigates a plethora of occult mysteries when Sci-Fi presents a two-day marathon of *Kolchak: The Night Stalker*, a sci-fi favorite seen occasionally on *Sci-Fi Series Collection*. It will air Monday, October 30, and Tuesday, October 31, beginning at 1 PM.

And finally, you can go behind the scenes of the Halloween Horror Nights events at Universal Studios, Florida, on the *Universal Halloween Special* airing Saturday, October 28, at 10:30 PM and 1:30 AM. See schedule for additional airings.

Have a spooky Halloween, and see you at Turkey Time. □

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The Punisher, Nick Fury and Dr. Who are all headed for the small screen.

BY EDWARD FLIXMAN

BEGINNING WITH "WAY OF THE WARRIOR," the two-hour premiere episode for *Deep Space 9*'s fourth season, Michael Dorn will become a regular member of the cast, reprising his role as the friendly Klingon, Lieutenant Commander Worf. Scheduled to air the week of October 2, the season debut will concern the growing threat of the Dominion within the Alpha Quandrant, and the crumbling peace treaty between the Klingon Empire and the Federation. Lieutenant Commander Worf's assignment will be as diplomatic liaison with the unruly Klingons.

Paramount's press release quotes executive producer Rick Berman: "In an exciting, unparalleled step, Captain Sisko and Lieutenant Commander Worf will join forces to face the growing threat from the Klingons. The increased presence of the most beloved bad guys in the *Star Trek* universe will help create an action-packed fourth season."



From The Next Generation's *"All Good Things" episode, the Once and Future Worf.*

In less stilted tones, Berman told the show business trade paper *Variety*, "We got the feeling in the last year that *The Next Generation* viewers had stopped watching *DS9*. We needed to get viewers to resample the show, and we thought having the Klingons back would do the trick."

Meanwhile, the Internet's *Star Trek* fans are continuing to rouse Paramount's ire by their penetration of the celluloid curtain. The latest bit of black market information circulating through the Net is a 1000-word synopsis of the plot for the next *Star Trek: Generations* film, planned for release in 1997. The detailed synopsis, which takes the *Generations* crew to the Borg homeworld, may be a very credible forgery, but seems likely to be the real thing, considering the many past *Trek* security leaks.

New World Entertainment is developing several characters from the pages of Marvel Comics for live-action telefilms—*The Punisher* for NBC (without Dolph Lundgren this time), *She-Hulk* for CBS, and, for Fox, a trio: *Nick Fury, Generation X*, and *Black Widow*.

Fox also is in production on two new *Alien Nation* films for the coming season and has revived its plan to return *Dr. Who* to the small screen, in a coproduction by Universal Television and the British Broadcasting Company. A *Who* story line has been approved, as has a tentative budget of $5.5 million; and Matthew Jacobs, whose writing credits include episodes of *Young Indiana Jones* and the dark fantasy film *Paper House*, is at work on the script as we go to press.

Amblin' Entertainment no longer is involved in the *Who* project, as Spielberg marshals all his resources for mounting DreamWorks SKG; the last few months have seen most of the pieces come together in the creation of the new studio, particularly in regard to its dealings with MCA-Universal. The elder studio will partner with DreamWorks in several areas, including overseas distribution, home video marketing, theme park, and other merchandising rights. DreamWorks' music division, which reportedly will debut with the first new recordings by George Michael since his war with Sony Music, will be a fifty-fifty partnership with MCA's Geffen Records.

The computer outfit Silicon Graphics has even spun off a new division, Silicon Studio, to work head-to-head with the DreamWorks team. They are developing an all-digital creation/production and management system capable of handling film, animation, television, music, and interactive media. Initially estimated to cost $50 million (much of that money coming from Silicon Studio, which subsequently will sell the system to others in the animation and CGI business), the "Digital Animation DreamMachine" will be interfaced with a storage system designed by IBM that will allow instant storage and retrieval of the massive amounts of data involved in digital media projects, and will allow teams of artists, at different workstations, to work on the same document at once. The only thing that remains to be determined is where this studio will be located. DreamWorks will release its first feature in 1996.

Batman's Chris O'Donnell recently wriggled out of his

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deal to co-star with Tommy Lee Jones in the DreamWorks (formerly Amblin') feature *Men In Black*, explaining that his role as an alien cop was too much like Robin (meaning, not the starring role). O'Donnell traded up to *Afterlife*, in which an elderly scientist's brain is transferred to the body of a young killer. Jean-Claude Van Damme previously was cast in the role, but dropped out. And director Philip Kaufman (*The Right Stuff*), unhappy with Columbia's budget for *Afterlife*, also has left the project.

Meanwhile, *Batman*'s Val Kilmer has been cast to co-star with Marlon Brando and Samuel Jackson in the remake of *The Island of Dr. Moreau*. The doctor's insane experiments in forced evolution will be visualized and realized by the ever-talented Stan Winston. In the meantime, Kilmer is in South Africa shooting *The Ghost and the Darkness* for Paramount Pictures, based upon a true story; Kilmer plays a young engineer who goes up against two lions on a killing spree.

"*The World Ends July 4th*" is the expected pitch on teaser ads in early '96 for next summer's sci-fi blockbuster *Independence Day*. Unfortunately, there may be trouble over the title; Warner Brothers made a melodrama of the same name in 1983, and—since they have their own alien visitor films, *Mars Attacks!* and *Contact*, in the works—they may battle for ownership.

Nevertheless, expect director Roland Emmerich and co-writer Dean Devlin, who scored a surprise hit with *StarGate* last year, to pull out all the stops for this alien invasion tale. Battling the invaders will be a fighter pilot (Will Smith), the U.S. President (Bill Pullman), and a cable installer who also happens to be a computer genius (Jeff Goldblum).

Speaking of genius, John Travolta will be paid in the neighborhood of $8 million to star in *Phenomenon* as a normal, everyday mook who becomes a genius when he is struck by what appears to be a lightning bolt.

And speaking of mooks—did you hear about the New Jersey computer fiend who got a movie deal over the Internet? Bill Marsilii met two film producers with a deal at TriStar through a writers' newsgroup on Usenet. He pitched his story by e-mail and made the sale. Marsilii's story, *The Forgotten Helper*, concerns an elf left behind by Santa in order to help reform a bratty little girl.



Fox's slate of TV movies includes the return of Dr. Who, *the Marvel comic adaptation* Nick Fury, *and two telefilms in the* Alien Nation *series.*

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Lucas now plans to shoot three Star Wars *films back-to-back, for completion by 1997.*

While on the topic of sudden riches, how about milkman Gregg Chabot and bus driver Kevin Peterka, whose sci-fi fantasy *When Heroes Go Down*, is being developed at Fox by Richard Zanuck? This one is set in the year 2020 and concerns a warrior and a fireman who team up to battle a plague of dragons. And then there's Ronnie Christenson, who got a deal worth about half a million dollars to write *Jason and the Golden Fleece* for Disney. Last, but not least, there's *Scary Movie*, described as a "hip, clever horror flick in the vein of *Heathers*." That script was the subject of a bidding war among Oliver Stone, Morgan Creek, and others; Miramax won, with an offer worth $500,000. (Don't these people realize that *Heathers* was a bad remake of *Massacre at Central High*?)

Tim Burton will be shooting *Mars Attacks!*, based on the famed collector cards, this fall, with release planned for next summer. Burton also picked up the rights to the more recent Dinosaurs Attack cards, and it's expected that both concepts will be used in the film. When that's done, he'll begin preparations for a big-screen adaptation of *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, the Broadway musical about a serial-killer hair stylist. *Catwoman* remains on his "to do" list, though, and may precede *Todd*, depending on schedules.

George Lucas seems anxious to get all three films of the opening *Star Wars* trilogy out the door by the end of this century. He recently told *Variety* reporter Rex Weiner that all three films will be shot back-to-back "like a TV series." Lucas expects to begin casting and some set-building and second-unit shooting in late 1996; all three films will be shot by the end of 1997, and the first of the new films will open in spring of 1998. Lucasfilm will not seek any outside financing for the films, which, he says, each will cost in the range of $60 million.

Dennis Miller, the acerbic comic best known for his stint anchoring "Weekend Update" on *Saturday Night Live*, is heading the cast of the second *Tales From The Crypt* film (the first, you may recall, was *Demon Knight*), *Bordello of Blood*. The screenplay, by Robert Zemeckis, Bob Gale, Gilbert Adler, and A.L. Katz, concerns down-and-out detective Rafe Guttman (Miller), who takes on the case of Bible-toting Katherine Verdoux's (Erika Eleniak) missing brother Caleb (Corey Feldman). The trail leads them to the seductive Lilith (Angie Everhart) and to the Reverend Current (Chris Sarandon), the originator of a demonic plot that made Lilith one of the undead, and ultimately to a house of pleasure where any man's desires can be completely fulfilled—with a payment in blood. A February 1996 release is planned.

In the strange sequel department, there is of course *Freddy vs. Jason*, the splatter movie that sounds like a wrestling ticket, now in the works at New Line Cinema. Will *Freddy vs. Leatherface* be far behind? Also, Fox is in development with a new *Dr. Doolittle*. This time, the doctor will be presented in less storybook terms, as a present-day eccentric who communes with animals.

For several months before the recent announcement of Michael Jordon and Bugs Bunny co-starring in *Space Jam*, producer Ivan Reitman and Joe Pytka, director of Nike's "Hare Jordan" TV ad campaign, had been working secretly on the full-length animated feature. The premise pits Bugs and his Looney Tune pals against Marvin the Martian and his alien cohorts, as Bugs appeals to Michael for help. Live-action shooting continues through the summer, involving Jordan and a large supporting cast of sports figures and hoop stars.

But the really exciting cartoon news is the new WB Network series, *Steven Spielberg Presents the Adventures of Pinky and the Brain*. The

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series will consist of "Spellbound," a half-hour lab-mice adventure previously shown as an episode of *Animaniacs!*, plus twelve all-new shows. Thirteen new *Animaniacs!* shows also are on order by Fox TV. The United Paramount Network (UPN) will introduce two new animated series in the Sunday 10-11 a.m. slot. *Space Strikers* combines traditional animation with computer-generated imagery; it concerns the struggle by an alliance of earthlings and aliens to save Earth from the evil "Master Phantom." The other series, *Teknoman*, is the story of one man's struggle to rescue his family from a warlord who rules an army of spider crabs. The producer, Saban Entertainment, claims that Teknoman is designed in the *anime* style.

Pioneer Entertainment will soon start an ambitious program of releasing Japanese original animated videos in the States; among the titles they have slated for release this year, in both subtitled and dubbed versions, are *Moldiver, Legend of the Dog Warriors, Tenchi Muyo, Green Legend Ran, Kishin Corps,* and *Armitage III.*

In fall of 1996, Hanna-Barbera will be bringing back *Jonny Quest*, the 11-year-old adventurer whose cartoon series ran through the '60s, and is currently on view in reruns on the Cartoon Network. The new *Jonny Quest* will be a few years older and a whole lot hipper, with a female partner sharing his exploits. And, H-B says, all the characters have been redesigned "to reflect the increasingly popular Japanese animation style."

Science fiction novelist Roger Zelazny, a six-time winner of the Hugo Award, died in June at the age of 58. Zelazny probably was best known to film fans for the novel *Damnation Alley*, one of his lighter works, which was badly adapted to film in 1977. The best of his novels, including *Lord of Light* and *Creatures of Light and Darkness*, combined religious and mythological concepts with science fiction. Zelazny's work has had a profound influence in the field of written SF, creating a brand of cerebral fantasy that few have tried to realize on film or in television.

In what seems to be a profound cosmic coincidence, SF writer Octavia Butler, whose own work echoes Zelazny's by similar incorporation of African myth and religion, received a grant of $295,000 from the MacArthur Foundation in the same week. The MacArthur grants are intended to allow artists to create without commercial constraints.

Also to be missed is Isadore "Friz" Freleng, one of the greats of Warner Brothers' original "Termite Terrace" animation bullpen, director of hundreds of classic Warner's shorts, from 1934's *Buddy's Trolley Troubles* in the pre-Looney Tunes days to *Daffy Duck's Fantastic Island* in 1983. Freleng added a little something to every one of the Warner pantheon of cartoon stars, though he was most closely associated with the characters that he developed in the late 1940s and early '50s, including Yosemite Sam, Sylvester and Tweety, and Speedy Gonzales. □



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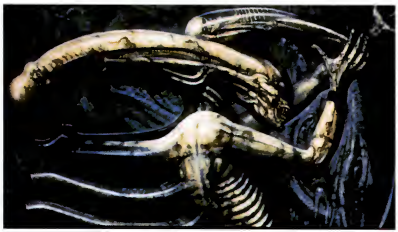
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H.R. Giger and Harlan Ellison get gamed; and Virtual Reality comes to your house.

BY ROBERT MARTIN

IN CASE YOU HAVEN'T NOTICED, there's a glut of CD-ROM products on the shelves these days. As rapidly as the new generation of cheap, fast drives have proliferated, so have start-up companies eager to exploit the realm of "new media." But most of these simply offer the same old media on a shiny disk; and it's increasingly difficult to pick from the crowd the few who have something new to offer.

One outfit that has certainly found a way to stand out is Cyberdreams, producers of *Dark Seed*, a game that takes the player deep into the realm of "Darkworld," a realm synthesized from the stunning artwork of H.R. Giger. With the recent release of the film *Species*, which also features Giger's fantastic design skills, Cyberdreams has announced three new CD-ROM products to be produced in collaboration with the artist.



Cyberdreams' collaborations with H.R. Giger (above) and Harlan Ellison (right) are not for wusses.

Available now is the most modest of the trio, the *H.R. Giger Screen Saver*, featuring nine modules displaying Giger's grotesque and sinuous artwork, and a tenth displaying his creations from *Species*. It's a screen saver, and if you own a computer, you know what it does; but this screen saver comes with a bonus—an original story by Harlan Ellison, "The Dreams a Nightmare Dreams," a fantasy that relates the origin of the biomechanical creatures of Giger's imagination and tells how they came to inhabit your computer. Ellison's story appears on the computer screen as text; the package also includes an audio tape of Ellison's dramatic reading of the tale.

This fall will bring *Dark Seed II*, the second visit to the "Darkworld." David Mullich, the head of Cyberdreams' development team, describes the second installment as a "much richer, more complex story—almost like a David Lynch film, in that people who appear to be quite mundane turn out to have a hidden, sinister aspect." The story line was developed in consultation with SF writer John Shirley.

The story begins with writer Mike Dawson (the same fellow who struggled with a monstrous embryo implanted in his brain in the first *Dark Seed*) recovering from his recent adventure. No sooner has he regained some portion of his senses than he witnesses the murder of his high school sweetheart and becomes the number one suspect. Dawson then receives a message from "The Keeper of the Scrolls," one of the few friendly creatures that he met in the first *Dark Seed*, advising him that the murder is part of a plot by the dark forces of the underrealm to re-open the gateway and to take revenge upon Dawson for their defeat at his hands. Needless to say, it is Dawson's task to clear his name of the murder charge and to defeat the dark conspiracy. Says Mullich, "the deeper one gets into the game, the more the metaphorical content comes forward as, in the game, Darkworld emerges as a metaphor for madness."

For the third new Giger project, Mullich is now engaged in preliminary meetings with Dennis Feldman, the screenwriter of *Species*, to develop a CD-ROM based on that film. "We're only at the stage of putting things on paper," Mullich says, "but the film naturally lends itself to computer game treatment. And Dennis Feldman knows games, his children play them, and he knows all the hot titles. We've only just met, but I really look forward to working with him."



The *Species* game won't arrive until well into 1996; in the meantime, science fiction gamers can sink their teeth into another very significant SF game title: Harlan Ellison's *I Have No Mouth And I Must Scream*, inspired by his story of the same name. This one is no kid's game; the five protagonists in this hyper-fiction are captives held by the

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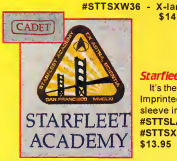
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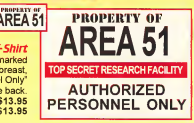
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#XFTSXK12 - X-Large



The Eye

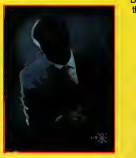
Black 100% cotton t-shirt with the eye printed in the middle of the storm.

#XFTSLK7 - Large
#XFTSXK7 - X-Large

The Agent

Black 100% cotton t-shirt with the mysterious agent.

#XFTSLK8 - Large
#XFTSXK8 - X-Large



Lightning

Black 100% cotton t-shirt with the *X-Files* logo imposed on the lightning storm.

#XFTSLK9 - Large
#XFTSXK9 - X-Large



New! "The Eye - 2"

Black 100% cotton t-shirt with a silk screened eye behind the X-Files logo printed in two colors on the front.

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#XFTSXK11 - X-Large



T-shirts in this section have the X-Files logo screen printed in two colors on the front, left chest.

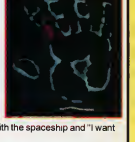




"X" Logo

Black 100% cotton t-shirt with the "X-Files" logo printed on the back surrounded by a green haze.

#XFTSLK4 - Large
#XFTSXK4 - X-Large



The Hand

Black 100% cotton t-shirt with the hand printed in blue with the red knuckle.

#XFTSLK5 - Large
#XFTSXK5 - X-Large



The Spaceship

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#XFTSXK6 - X-Large



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INFINITE CHANNELS

Continued from page 22

computer AM (whose digitized voice is spoken by the author); if they are to hope for escape, each character must deal with some highly-charged personal issues—genuine, real-life questions of courage, friendship, insanity, and self-sacrifice are as essential to the game as they are to Ellison's classic story.

Possibly you, like many others, have heard Ellison castigate all computer games as "time-wasters." At least we've heard Ellison get worked up about the topic, so naturally we were curious about this collaboration.



Giger's Species *creature "Sil" will soon be available on a CD-Rom game from Cyberdreams.*

"He's still *very* vocally anti-game," Mullich freely admits. "He still says that he has no interest in them, and he still believes that they're a waste of time—which I think is unfortunate, because my own interest in doing projects like these is to see if we cannot develop an interactive literature. But the reason he did this, he told me, was simply that he had never done it before. It was a new experience that he thought he'd try.

"He was very involved in developing the storyline of the game, and wrote much of the dialog that appears in it. So the story, the characterizations and the dialog are all much more literate than you're used to seeing in a CD-ROM."

Fans of role-playing games will be delighted to hear that early 1996 will bring the release of *Hunters of Ralk*, a game developed by Cyberdreams in collaboration with Gary Gygax, the RPG pioneer whose *Advanced Dungeons &Dragons* remains the standard by which all such games are judged. The game will feature texture-mapped graphics and realistic 3-D animation.

All of the above will be released for both PC and Macintosh; all except the Giger screen saver will also be available for the Sony Playstation.

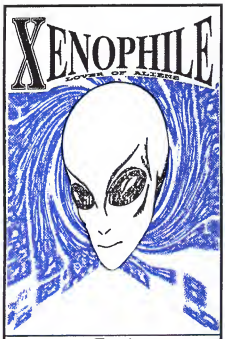
Moving on to a less literate, but equally absorbing computer experience, you may recall our recent trip down to Orlando and into the city of Agrabah via Disney's virtual reality testing lab, where the Disney Imagineers are showing off their "magic carpet ride" to Disney World's visitors. If you don't remember, go read "Future Shock" in the June edition (yes, I switched columns this month, nice of you to notice). Disney has announced a tentative 1996 date for the opening of the full VR attraction; and a lengthier, though less immersive, version of the same experience will be available for you to enjoy at home, also sometime in 1996.

"We're doing a home version of it," confirmed John Snoddy when we spoke to him a second time (this time getting his name right). "Obviously, it won't have everything we're building into the attraction. The story will be focussed more on exploration of the environment."

The CD-ROM version will, of course, do without the head-tracked 3-D graphics and dimensionally sourced audio of the planned park attraction; instead, the player's point-of-view will be displayed on the flat surface of a computer monitor. While the CD-ROM's world will be generated from a compacted version of the same database developed for the park attraction, game-play will be significantly different. "We've found that there's a tremendous difference between looking into the world on a flat monitor," Snoddy explains, "and looking at the world around you in a fully immersive environment—it makes a big difference in how you feel about the world, and how you perceive yourself in relationship to it; and that has a tremendous effect on what the person wants to do."

Disney's plan is to make one big splash as they introduce the game for several platforms at once, a task made easier by the modular approach Snoddy's team has taken in building the game. Snoddy tells us that, in the course of developing the VR system, his team has created an entire production and playback system that will essentially allow them to build and test the home version for all platforms, prior to writing the machine-specific code.

That development system will also be useful in putting a number of other VR attrac-



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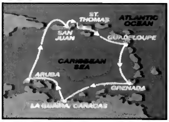
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tions and CD-ROM experiences into the pipeline. Snoddy, restrained from any announcement by Disney policy, won't even say whether Disney has decided on a particular property to make its next project. But, engaging in pure speculation, it would seem that the extensive programming already accomplished to create a flying carpet could easily be adapted to an undersea adventure—say, for instance, a fantasy about a smallish mermaid, perhaps.

Meanwhile, true VR tech is now being marketed for the home; "Virtual i-glasses," a product of Virtual i-O Incorporated, have been available at CompUSA and numerous other retail outlets since May. While the price of $799 seems high compared to most game accessories, it's actually a price/performance breakthrough; the VR glasses, weighing about eight ounces, produce a VGA-standard 3-D view with head-tracking (since I mentioned head-tracking twice in this column, I suppose I should tell you what it is; it's when you turn your head and your point-of-view changes accordingly). Software that works with the i-glasses is, as yet, rare, but the glasses themselves come bundled with 3-D versions of several popular PC games, including *Heretic*, *Tank Commander*, *Flight Unlimited* and *Ascent*, as well as 3-D head-tracking drivers that V i-O says will transform the games *Magic Carpet* and the current *Star Wars* bestseller *Dark Forces* into VR applications. The glasses are for PC's only, so Mac jockeys like myself will have to wait.

In other VR news, Virtual World Entertainment has entered a deal with the United Artists Theater Circuit, whereby UA will be building Virtual World Centers into any new theaters that it establishes in major urban areas over the next five years. Virtual World currently has two outlets in Southern California, with a third opening in Santa Monica later this year; the UA deal should speed the proliferation of the VR battle parlors.

While many of Brandon Lee's fans continue to swear that it can't be done, Edward R. Pressman Films is preparing to film *The Crow: City of Angels*, with Vincent Perez in the role Lee originated. The production is partially financed by Acclaim Entertainment; Acclaim's CD-ROM interactive version of the film will be developed and shot simultaneously with the theatrical.

The new 32-bit and 64-bit game machines provide better graphics depth and video playback than either PC's or Macs. But before you spend the three or four hundred for a state-of-the-art game machine, keep in mind that Compaq Computers plans to do some catching up by Christmastime, with a new model of their Presario system boasting a low-cost, high-powered new graphics chip. The new systems will implement TV-quality video and CD-quality sound at speeds comparable to the best of the new game machines; or at least that's what Compaq is saying, and they usually back up their words with real products. □

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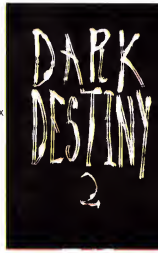
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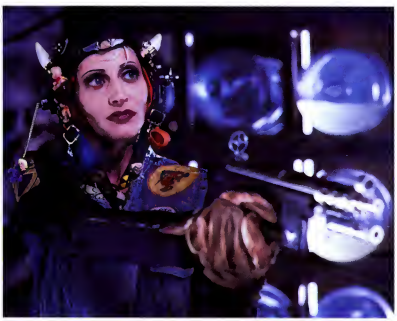
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Can these sci-fi videos show us the Woman of the Future?

BY STEVEN PUCHALSKI

IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR STRONG FEMALE role models in science fiction cinema, you've got a better chance of finding a leftover cannoli at Marlon Brando's house. Unfortunately, for every character like Ripley in the *Alien* trilogy, there are dozens of female roles that are only included as window dressing for the male-dominated heroics. It's a trend that harkens back to the days of Captain Kirk's weekly tryst with any half-dressed spacebimbo who stepped onto *The Enterprise*, and even poor Princess Leia ended up sporting an intergalactic bikini by the conclusion of the *Star Wars* trilogy.

With this fact in mind, it's a pleasure to report that *Tank Girl* (MGM Home Video) is terrific fun, featuring one of the most independent female heroines in film today. Much of its success lies with director Rachel Talalay (previously known for more generic fodder like *Ghost in the Machine* and *Freddy's Dead: The Final Nightmare*), who rips loose with a wild, grungy vision of the near future, based on the cult comic strip by Alan Martin and Jamie Hewlett. High praise should also go to Lori Petty, who has the right look, a savage edge, and charm to burn. Though overstaged in her early films (*Free Willy*, *A League of Their Own*) by larger-than-life co-stars (Keiko the Whale, Madonna), Petty comes into her own with this raucous title role and looks like she's having the time of her life. Though promoted as a wacky, outrageous romp, the savvy script also mixes hardcore attitude, action, and even a smidgen of social politics into a twenty-first century mindtrip that plays like the juvenile delinquent offspring of *The Road Warrior* and *Thelma and Louise*.



Tank Girl: *Can a rebel babe with a thing for militant kangaroos be the new femme ideal?*

The year is 2033 A.D. and the world's been turned into a wasteland due to a total lack of rain. Even worse, the country is policed by the Gestapolike Department of Water and Power, who wants to monopolize the precious water supply. Still, some pockets of individualism remain, such as a secluded household of young squatters that includes Petty as our punk heroine, Rebecca. But when her home is overrun by government storm troopers and her roommates are unceremoniously eradicated, Rebecca's wise-ass attitude gets put to the test in a government prison camp run by villainous bigwig Malcolm McDowell. Once again proving himself the master of suave sadism, McDowell plays a guy so cruel he'd suck the H_20 out of his enemies, then gulp down a glass of their bodily fluids as a chaser. And his plan for Rebecca involves having her infiltrate the infamous Rippers: a mutant revolutionary faction that's stealing water and keeping McDowall in a perpetual snit. But she'll have nothing to do with this undercover scheme. Her mind is set purely on escape, and with the aid of fellow-prisoner, mechanic-extraordinaire Naomi Watts, they hit the dunes in a newly acquired tank and link up with the Rippers on their own.

And wait until you get a look at these Rippers, who are a ragtag team of half-man/half-kangaroo genetic experiments who've gone totally radical. And even if Ice-T wasn't amongst them, under heavy kangaroo make-up (courtesy of Stan Winston), it's not difficult to see that director Talalay is making a twisted statement about white chicks and black militants banding together to put down The White Man. But nothing is to be taken too seriously in this high-powered enterprise, since even the Rippers seem rather fatuous, with their endless slobbering over the gals. Meanwhile, Talalay sneaks in some unexpected tidbits, including a visit to a futuristic brothel that transforms into a showstopping Cole Porter/Busby Berkeley musical number. And when *Tank Girl* goes into action for the explosive finale, she does so in grand style, with a trusty martini glass in hand.

This is a rare case of a film that captures all the spirit of its source material, and then some. The radical editing and cinematography give it an eye-popping veneer; snippets of furious animation (from the same folks who worked on *Natural Born Killers*) help advance the plot, even as it acknowledges its comic strip roots; and the cool soundtrack mixes 'oldies' like Richard Hell's "Blank

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Generation" with newer girl-bands such as Hole, L7, Bjork, and Belly. Above all, Petty and Watts make a fabulous team. Finally, we get a pair of female heroines who are sexy without having to strip, funny without being total airheads, and can show vulnerability while remaining in total control of the situation. It's a long overdue sight. Unfortunately, *Tank Girl* tanked at the box office—savor this one, 'cause there aren't going to be any sequels.

If you're in the mood for even more sci-fi heroines, one of the earliest, most stylish examples is *Barbarella* (Paramount Home Video), based on the erotic comic by Jean Claude Forest. This hallucinogenic treat from the late '60s features Jane Fonda in one of her early sex kitten roles, as she single-handedly saves the entire universe, while fueling adolescent male fantasies with her well-rounded heels and minimalist wardrobe (which looks suspiciously like Cher's present-day attire). But what else would you expect from director Roger Vadim (at the time, Fonda's husband), who earlier shocked audiences with the taboo-breaking *And God Created Woman*? And after one look at Fonda's antigravity striptease (with much of her anatomy carefully concealed by the opening credits), we know we're in for pure kitsch and cheesecake from the reigning queen of exercise videos.

Barbarella is your typical blonde Earthling spacegirl from the year 40,000, whose personal pink spaceship comes complete with a fur-lined interior. Her mission is to search for crazed scientist Duran Duran (yes, this is where the band got its name), who's developed the Positronic Ray and threatens to disrupt the peaceful state of the entire galaxy. Though the script by Vadim and Terry Southern (*Easy Rider, Dr. Strangelove*) is low in the Coherence Department, her adventures are filled with bizarre costumes, sets, and psychedelic special effects. From being terrorized by a gang of feral children and their razor-toothed dolls, to her adventures in Sogo, the sinister City of Night, Barbarella uses any excuse to have her clothes removed. First, she gets into a predicament that invariably leaves her garments in shreds, after which she's rescued by some bizarre stranger with whom she has sex. The best example is a blind angel named Pygar (John Philip Law), who's lost his will to fly—that is, until he lures Barbarella into his nest. It all concludes with her taking on the Matmos, a sentient sea of Ultimate Evil, armed with only her innocent sexuality.

Though Barbarella is the heroine, that doesn't stop Vadim from turning her into a wide-eyed sex toy of the future, and the entire movie revels in fetishistic elements such as Leather Man, Pleasure Machines, and various low-grade torture. And though far from P.C. by today's standards, Barbarella's bawdy comic book charms are perfectly complemented by spectacular set design and photography, plus an international cast including

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MONEY BACK GUARANTEE

David Hemmings, Milo O'Shea, and Marcel Marceau—who all seem to realize how ridiculous the entire movie is. Nearly three decades later, it still stands as a dazzling, inventive slice of pop science fiction.

At least Fonda's *Barbarella* has a distinct personality, unlike the title character in *Cherry 2000* (Orion Home Video), which is nothing but a domestic sex robot from the near future. It begins when yuppie 'hubbie' Sam Treadwell gets frisky with his sultry robo-wife (Pamela Gidley) on the wet kitchen floor and accidentally shorts her out. He then becomes so obsessed with getting another identical mate that he dumps his boring day job and heads into the desert to scavenge for a new model 2000. But while the thrust of his mission is to locate another low-I.Q.ed Cherry, along the way he teams up with the warmblooded Melanie Griffith (back when she was Anthony Banderas'age, long before her current celebrity), in the role of a buckskinned tracker with a neon-red haircut. And Griffith usurps the female lead when she agrees to take Sam on his pathetic quest.

One problem is that the baby-voiced Griffith is nobody's idea of a tough, no-nonsense heroine. And even though she drives a turbo-charged red Mustang, fires off bazookas and runs blockades, her tough-as-nails persona disappears the instant she gets the hots for Sam—once again perpetuating the myth that all a woman needs is the love of a good man. Unfortunately, Sam isn't the most sympathetic hero either, spending most of the movie mourning the loss of his plastic partner (it's comparable to a love story about a man and his blow-up doll) when they aren't battling desert marauders or searching for the Robot Graveyard. Griffith does her best with the lackluster material, ably supported by Tim Thomerson, Ben Johnson, Brion James, and a brief appearance by a young Larry Fishburne as a Glu Glu Club lawyer. And though the predictable plot includes some good jabs at pop culture gone wild and rampant consumerism, director Steve DeJarnett never approaches the question of "what is human?" with any originality, opting for cheap thrills instead. Considering its more-than-adequate budget, it can only be seen as a disappointment.

While on the topic of robotic *femmes*, an even sillier effort is *Galaxina* (MCA Home Video), which nevertheless gives us one of the most alluring automatons in drive-in movie history, thanks to Playmate of the Year Dorothy Stratten's title performance. It's too bad the rest of the movie is just a low-rent sci-fi parody of everything from *Star Wars*, *Alien*, and *2001*, whose idea of subtlety is hiring Avery Schreiber to star as the blustery captain of the Police Cruiser Infinity in the year 3008. Then again, would you expect anything more credible from director William Sachs, best known for unintentional gut-busters like *The Incredible Melting Man* and the teen comedy *Van Nuys Boulevard*?



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Jane Fonda as Barbarella *holds a blaster to the head of the Black Queen (Anita Pallenberg) while the angel (John Phillips Law) looks on.*

In addition to the ship's all-male crew, there's Galaxina, a blonde female robot who not only pilots the ship, but also squeezes into a skimpy French maid outfit at dinner-time in order to serve the slobbering men. Of course, the macho Sergeant Thor (Stephen Macht) falls for this living doll (who doesn't even speak for the first half of the movie—making her the perfect misogynist's dream girl), and while the men doze in their "cryo-sleep chambers" during a twenty-seven-year journey, the lovesick Galaxina reprograms herself to talk, ordering a catalog-bought set of female sex organs in order to complete her simulation of a real, live woman.

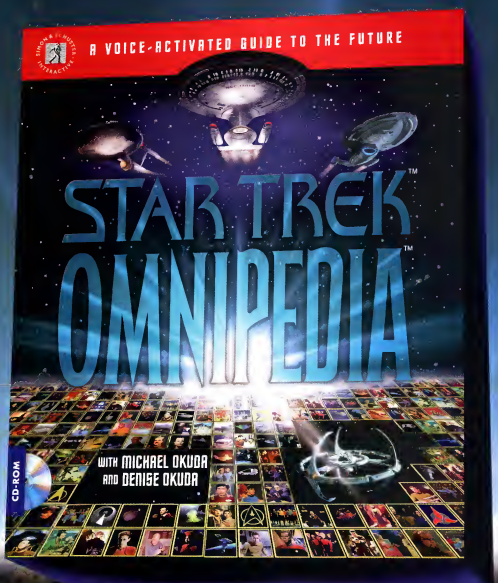
The script gives the luscious (but vapid) Galaxina plenty to do—a wise move, since every other aspect of the movie is deadening. When she's not playing the buxom sex object, Galaxina gets all the grunt work while the male cast members sit on their collective behinds, crack jokes, and visit a space-whorehouse. Her big mission is to recover the precious Blue Star (a glowing rock in a box), which leads to a Western shoot-out, a space-age motorcycle gang, and an unamusing Darth Vader-esque villain. Though certainly no masterpiece, at least Stratten has a likable presence and the filmmakers are unapologetic with their nonstop stupidity.

While on the subject of automatons, let's not forget Brigitte Nielsen, best known for her work in *Red Sonja* and an early career of hanging onto ex-squeeze Sly Stallone's coat-tails. Because, even though this Nordic lass doesn't play a robot in *Galaxis* (Turner Home Entertainment), she might as well have, given her total lack of human emotion. This, her latest straight-to-video outing is standard sci-fi, beginning on a distant planet where a nomadic civilization is under siege by a sadistic army. Who can save them? Only the Amazonlike Ladera, played by the somber Nielsen, who transports to modern-day Los Angeles to search for a sacred crystal which can save her people. Unfortunately, she's been followed to the West Coast by the powerful warlord Kyla, played by Richard Moll, who's apparently let his hair grow out after his lengthy *Night Court* gig.

As long as Ladera stomps about the city in her space lingerie (which seems more conducive to club-hopping than combat), towers over her male co-stars and tosses stunt-thugs through the air, she's not half bad. Just don't allow her to strain her acting abilities with anything difficult—like speaking. Along the way, Ladera picks up a bland Earth man (John H. Brennan) who's in possession of the glowing crystal, with the pair surviving shoot-outs, jail cells, the Mob, and trendy L.A. nightspots. Meanwhile, the invulnerable Kyla follows her every move, with police bullets bouncing harmlessly off his cheap plastic chest plate. There's even one of those gratuitous Sam Raimi cameos, with the cult director as a snivelling "Nervous Official" who gets blasted by Moll for his incessant toadying.

The FX aren't bad, but just to show how quickly times change, the once-intriguing (now-overused) morphing sequences are already getting dull. All the while, director William Mesa puts his cardboard characters through their paces, valiantly trying to turn the stoic Nielsen into the '90s answer to Sybil Danning. Unfortunately, the ice queen's worst predicament is the fact she's trapped in a cut-rate *Terminator* wannabe. And even though Nielsen displays almost as much cleavage as Schwarzenegger, the positive similarities end there. □

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SIMON & SCHUSTER INTERACTIVE





BRAVE NEW WORLD

Strange Days producer Steven-Charles Jaffe helps create a fable for the 21st century

BY LISA MACCARILLO

IT'S THE EVE OF THE NEW MILLENnium, but Lenny Nero (Ralph Fiennes) has seen better days. Business is booming; SCQUID is the hottest commodity to hit the streets since designer drugs, but while riding high on the profits from the illicit use of the new technology, Lenny has lost a part of himself.

"This is a device that was developed by the Feds, which implies the intelligence community, to replace the body wire; so, instead of just having a microphone tape a conversation, this device allows you to record an experience," says Steven-Charles Jaffe who, along with James Cameron, is producing Director Kathryn Bigelow's futuristic mystery-thriller *Strange Days*. SCQUID, which stands for Super Conducting Quantum Interference Device, records not only sound but sight, sensation, thought, everything that makes up a human experience. As Jaffe explains: "This is a technology that has a lot of wonderful sides to it. If someone doesn't have the courage or the money to experience something, then they can have this experience created by someone else and actually buy a piece of someone else's life, play it, enjoy it, and not get their hands dirty, so to speak."

With a device like SCQUID, the potential for abuse is immense, and that's how Lenny Nero carves out a living in 1999 Los Angeles. The problem, of course, is that it's also how he gets hooked. "He is a very slick operator who tells people he can get them



Photos: Merie W. Wallace

anything they want—they just have to trust him," explains Jaffe. Meanwhile, however, he begins to recede into a fantasy world in which his former girlfriend Faith (played by Juliette Lewis) never left him. "It's very difficult for him to get over her because, though she has moved on, he still has these great experiences from their past to relive," says the producer.

Jaffe became involved with *Strange Days*-shortly after reading Cameron's screenplay for the film, which he describes as "a noiresque murder mystery/thriller." He had previously worked with Bigelow as the producer of her critically acclaimed horror sleeper *Near Dark*, and the duo had been looking for another project to do together. When he learned that Jim Cameron, whom he'd known for years, was writing a film for Bigelow to direct, he was immediately interested. "What attracted me to the story was that there were at least six richly developed characters," explains the experienced producer, whose numerous credits include *Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country*, *Company Business*, *Don Quixote*, *The Fly II*, and the wildly successful *Ghost*, which he executive produced. "It's extremely difficult to find scripts with one well-developed character, let alone six. The stories that I've read that are near-futurist just have so much hardware in them and so little character development that no matter how intriguing the plot can be, you just can't get emotionally involved; there's no story. But this was a very engaging screenplay. Jim wrote an amazing story with really complex characters who show their private side to us and a totally different public side to the people that they are interacting with. I thought that was really fascinating, especially in a movie that was set in the near future."

Opposite, Angela Bassett plays Lenny Nero's friend Mace-Lornette Mason, a limo driver with a good shooting arm; above, the image of Nero (Ralph Fiennes) dominates the revelries as the year 2000 arrives.

Jaffe then began working with Bigelow and Cameron to create the emotional and tactile experience they wanted for SCQUID, using the comparatively limited medium of feature film . While Jaffe is reluctant to discuss the exact techniques, he predicts that the creations of Digital Domain (the FX outfit headed by Cameron, Stan Winston, and Scott Ross, with a major investment from IBM) and Skywalker

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The Art of Entertainment





Opposite, Mace comes to Lenny's rescue once again. Center, Lenny protects himself. Above, Lenny's ex-girlfriend, pop singer Faith Justin (Juliete Lewis), and record promoter Philo Gant (Michael Wincott).

Sound's Academy Award-winning pioneers Gary Rydstrom and Gloria Borders will blow audiences away. "We spent about a year developing some technology with cameras to enable us to make this more than a mere POV shot of a movie," he says. "And people up at Skywalker have done an amazing job of putting you into a multi-dimensional experience that takes it several notches beyond what's been delivered in film. I think the result is awesome. There are digital effects, there are pyrotechnical effects, but there's certainly a fair amount of action in which visual and practical effects 'leak' into each other. I don't really want to elaborate too much on it because we worked so hard to come up with something that will leave the audience wondering how we did it."

Developing a look for the eve of the millennium also presented numerous design challenges for the filmmakers. "The film begins December 30th, 1999 and ends on January 1st, 2000, which is daunting. It's a date that's become an icon because I actually never thought I'd live to the year 2000... well, knock on wood. It has such an intimidating edge to it, and yet it's only five years from now."

Working with production designer Lilly Kilvert (*Legends of the Fall and In The Line of Fire*), they conceived a near-future which was unsettlingly different from our own world, and yet not the slick and sterile "future" which is quickly becoming a sci-fi cliché. "Most of the movie takes place at night, and it's quite richly photographed by Matt Leonetti," says Jaffe. "Things have gotten worse rather than better. There's much more of a police and military presence. There are road blocks, like in *The Year of Living Dangerously*. Cars haven't changed too much, not like in some movies where they look slick but not functional. I don't want to pat ourselves on the back yet, but I think we were very prudent in not creating a *totally* new world where people have plastic shoulder pads which actually look like the Michelin Man on a diet, like in *Demolition Man*. Ours is an unobtrusive concept of the future in the sense that it isn't full of slick new hardware; there is hardware, but it's minimal, and that's the great thing about the movie—it's not a hardware movie."

One element essential to the believability of the piece involved the filmmaker's specific vision of the turn of the millennium and maintaining plausibility in imagining an event just a little more than four years into our future. "We studied a lot of futurist books and drawings and looked in the past at how the world has changed and how major events have been celebrated—either historically or in movies," Jaffe explains. "We decided that in the year 2000, the millennium changing is going to be commercialized and capitalized in the fashion of the Olympic games. There will be huge billboards talking about a celebration, and we designed these billboards which are evident in the movie—they don't hit you over the head, but you'll notice them—and it will give the audience one in a series of visual motifs that lets you know it's not taking place today."

The casting process brought to the film two Academy Award nominees and critical favorites: Ralph Fiennes, who chilled audiences as the barbaric



commandant in *Schindler's List;* and Angela Bassett, who recreated the roller coaster life of pop-soul singer Tina Turner in *What's Love Got to do With It.* "This is totally different from anything Ralph has ever done, and what he brought to this was enormous heart, enormous sincerity, and a great intellectual, emotional side to this character," says Jaffe. "Jim wrote a great script, and the characters were extremely rich. Ralph brought another richness to it which Kathryn molded, and I think we have some really sterling results.

"We spent a lot of time very carefully casting the movie and trying to find the right person, and we were just so thrilled to get the script to Ralph and have him like it as much as he did. Ralph is so smart and so wise in his choice of material that he'll never be type-cast. He goes from *Schindler's List* to *Quiz Show* to the English stage—he is a chameleon in the best sense of the word, and a brilliant actor."

The story's action begins when a SCQUID clip is left anonymously for Lenny by an unknown party. The experience contained within it is the murder of someone Lenny knew—someone who used to record clips for him, in fact. As Jaffe notes: "It is very painful for him to watch and experience this murder. If you were *listening* to a murder recorded by a body wire, it would probably be painful and frightening, especially if it was someone you knew, but you could be detached from most of your sensorial experiences. When you play back one of these clips, like it or not, you're not only watching what happens, but you're experiencing the thrill the killer is experiencing. So, it's quite a tricky thing."

The discovery sets in motion a series of events in which Lenny is accompanied by his bodyguard and confidante Mace, played by Bassett. "Mace is a security limo driver who is probably his best friend in almost a maternal sense," says the producer. "She's one tough cookie. She really looks after him, puts up with a lot of his problems and frustrations, and she helps him to unravel the mystery of these frightening tapes that are being left off for him."

The mystery culminates on New Year's Eve, 1999, as a blowout to end all blowouts goes down in a semi-futuristic downtown L.A.; Cameron's script describes it as "the mother of all parties," a concept which at first intimidated his budget-conscious co-producer.

"I knew what he meant by that; I just didn't think I had the money for it, and I didn't," Jaffe says. "We had to come up with a way to attract at least 10,000 people to downtown L.A.! Having my back up to a wall, we came up with the idea, 'If we can't afford to pay them, why don't we try charging people? We'll have a concert and charge people ten dollars a head to come.'"

The result was probably the biggest rave in history, with the pop band Dee Lite entertaining 17,000 partygoers in the jungle island of high-rises that is downtown L.A. "We had seven thousand people crash the gate." Jaffe laughs. "When they all showed up, I relaxed an enormous amount and got very excited, seeing this huge crowd in front of us. It was *quite* spectacular."

Besides the enormous party scene, the filmmakers faced numerous additional challenges, which took a toll on the crew. "We had seventy-seven nights of shooting, which I think is a record," he says with a sigh. "It's very strenuous; it's very tough on people's personal and professional lives. People get edgy and we had to keep everyone's spirits together for all this time for this difficult but good work."

Despite the strenuous and demanding schedule, the participation of Cameron—a mercurial filmmaker whose ability to push his crew is matched only by his own willingness to work as hard or harder—became an enormous asset to the production. "It has been and is a great, very difficult movie to have made," says Jaffe. "I don't think it could have worked as well had I not been involved with Jim and his company and all his support. He gave me a lot of freedom to give Kathryn what she needed. It was just an extremely creative threesome and a great collaboration, which I enjoy as a producer."

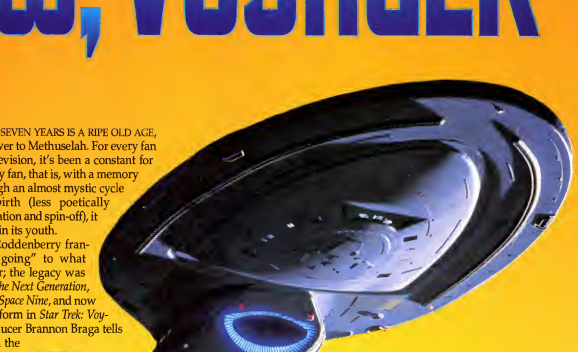
Ultimately, Jaffe feels rewarded to have worked on a project which he hopes will help avoid some of the film's dire predictions for the very near future from coming to be. "This film could be taken as a public service announcement—I'm serious.

"Watch carefully and learn from it. Otherwise, things might get much worse." □



Voyagers assemble! Clockwise from front-and-center: Kate Mulgrew, Robert Picardo, Roxann Biggs-Dawson, Robert Beltran, Tim Russ, Ethan Phillips, Jennifer Lien, Robert Duncan McNeill and Garrett Wang.

Now, VOYAGER



Midway between seasons, co-creator and producer Brannon Braga takes stock of the newest Trek *incarnation.*

BY DON E. PETERSON

IN A MEDIUM WHERE SEVEN YEARS IS A RIPE OLD AGE, *Star Trek* is TV's answer to Methuselah. For every fan of science fiction television, it's been a constant for three decades—every fan, that is, with a memory that long. Yet, through an almost mystic cycle of death and re-birth (less poetically referred to as cancellation and spin-off), it has managed to retain its youth.

The heirs to the Roddenberry franchise are still "boldly going" to what remains the final frontier; the legacy was renewed with *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, revised for *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, and now takes a new, yet familiar form in *Star Trek: Voyager*. Co-creator and producer Brannon Braga tells us that he's pleased with the overall direction of the show's first year, though he acknowledges the first season has had its shaky moments.

"Compared to other *Star Trek* shows coming out of the gate, I think *Voyager* is the most fully realized and fully formed," asserts Braga. "I think our success has a lot to do with the writers who have been doing the other shows for a long time; and we also have an excellent cast, most of whom knew what *Star Trek* was about. That eliminated the usual awkwardness of people settling in and discovering what the show is—especially since it was carefully mapped out and had a rich history. I think it was a very solid first season of episodes. We did some very imaginative stories, and more than anything we had some great character development."

Though the show's ratings fell well below the high numbers achieved in its impressive debut, the fact that it managed to hold onto consistent ratings week after week is proof that it is reaching a hard core of *Trek* fans. Of all the UPN shows, *Voyager* will be the only show to return for a second season.

"The ratings are a different ball game than in syndication," notes Braga. "The ratings have been really good. They tend to dip a bit when we show reruns, but from what I am told the ratings are really good and the show is a big success.

"If I had one complaint it would probably be that we didn't fully pay off on the premise of the series, which is being lost in the most frightening, strange, and unexplored regions of space every week," says Braga. "It was unfortunate that the first couple of aliens that we saw were not only humanoid, partly because of production limitations, but they were also extremely similar to earthlings in their culture. I think that was a grave error in some ways. The sto-



The holographic Doc Zimmerman discovers the strange Ocampa biology of Kes in the Voyager pilot, The Caretaker.

ries were good—I'm not saying they were bad shows. I just think we could have worked harder to come up with some more interesting things in this quadrant."

Though he's reluctant to divulge specifics regarding the coming season, this aspect seems one Braga is resolved to change. And there are others: "You're going to see a lot of action-adventure shows, and I think you'll see less bickering among the crew, less unhappiness. And I think people are finally going to settle into their roles as explorers, with less whining about getting home.

"I think in the first season it was only natural for the crew to finally let the situation sink in. Now I think you'll see a much more cohesive and enthusiastic crew. You'll see more of Officer Chakotay (Robert Beltran) and Lt. Paris (Robert Duncan McNeill) and, hopefully, we'll keep on writing imaginative stories."

Ironically, Braga feels that the best episodes of the last season were the final four that have been held back, to give season two a head start over the other network fare.

"I really felt those four episodes were pretty good; I thought we had hit our stride. It would have been a nice way to end the first season."

The season premiere will actually be the show that was designed as season one's finale, written by Braga with Jeri Taylor. "It's an episode," says Braga, "where the crew discovers a group of human beings in cryostasis on a planet—one of whom is Amelia Earheart. So Janeway and Amelia Earheart have an adventure together."

After a season's work with Mulgrew—a last-minute choice after production began with Genevieve Bujold in the Janeway role—Braga is eager to sing the Captain's



captain to be emotional in front of her crew, and I can understand that," Braga responds. "To a certain extent I agree, but if you want to talk about melodramatic, then what about Kirk? With Kirk, you accept that because he's a man, yet, because Janeway is a woman, you *don't* accept it? Come on, no one got more emotionally intense than Kirk, and I think Janeway has a lot of those qualities. It makes for an interesting dynamic."

With each *Trek* off-shoot, certain characters immediately are embraced by the audience, and Braga feels Doc Zimmerman (Robert Picardo) was the first break-out role with his goofy charm and cynical sense of humor; but in the pre-production stages, he says, it didn't look that way at all.

"When we sat down to brainstorm what we were going to do with the character, it was the one character we didn't know what to do with, and we were fearful that we would have nowhere to go with the doctor. As it turned out, he is one of the favorite characters and certainly the most fun in some ways. People love him and that happened rather organically because of Bob.

"In the upcoming season, we're tinkering with the idea of possibly giving him a romance, but who knows? Stories for him always come up—it's the other characters that I think we need to focus on. I think Paris was sorely under-serviced and misrepresented last season, and I think Chakotay could use more screen time as well.

"I think Paris came off as a little misogynistic, and that certainly was not the intent. Every time he was on screen, he was chasing after chicks, getting laid, and getting accused of murder as a result. I think he could use some more heroic stories, and we're planning to do that. He really hasn't had a big show yet."

But, overall, Braga tells us, he expects the show will carry along on its current course

praises. "Kate was the best thing that could have happened. It was a blessing, because she's brilliant in the role. We all love her, and she's so happy to be there. It's great to have someone who is giving everything for the role. There's an energy she gives off that helps the writers write for her. The same goes for the rest of the cast; after the first day of dailies you start to see these characters better because the actors are bringing so much to them. They were really discovering the characters, and just by seeing their gestures, faces and mannerisms, you start to see the characters better when you're writing them."

While fans agree that Mulgrew is splendid when exercising the strength of command, there has been some criticism of scripts that have displayed Janeway's emotional side. "Some people feel it's inappropriate for the

THE TREK TRILOGY

IS THE *STAR TREK* UNIVERSE GETTING A BIT cluttered for your tastes? Not exactly sure what the new franchise is trying to say? Braga offers a few observations as to what *Trek* has tried to accomplish in the past and what it will hope to achieve well into the 21st Century.

■ THE NEXT GENERATION: "I think that show was about exploration," he says. "I think the final episode really captured it with Q's speech to Picard, where he says 'You can explore the cosmos and chart for new anomalies, and meet new aliens, but the true exploration is within yourself and the true frontiers are chartered by the human mind and heart.' When you look back at *The Next Generation*, you really remember them as great sci-fi adventures, and also that they were about great characters. It may be perceived as an adventure show, but it's also really a character drama."

■ DEEP SPACE NINE: "Mike Teller once said that this show is not about so much exploration, but about exploring what you have," says Braga. "It's a show about taking responsibility and a show about making a disastrous situation work for the benefit of all. That's an incredibly optimistic show with a very *Star Trek* message. It's about a group of people who are not going to fly off on a starship every week. They're going to stay right where they are and make their situation work out. I think a lot of people say it's grim and dark and depressing, but it's not really that at all. The show is very noble and the characters are really holding the fort."

■ VOYAGER: "I'm still not sure yet what the show is about," he admits. "I would hesitate to make a grand, eloquent proclamation of what it's about because I feel like I'm just trying to discover that. At the moment, I would say it's about people working together and faced with an extraordinary dire situation come together to re-evaluate their lives and move on. That's it at the emotional core, but pervasive throughout all of *Star Trek* is the spirit of exploration and finding new ways to improve upon the human condition. And we're certainly trying to deliver that as well."

—DEP



without any major changes or shake-ups for the next season.

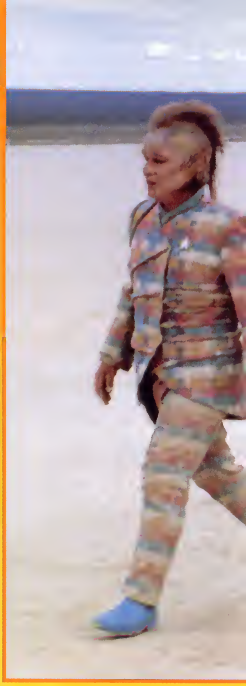
"We're still exploring the possibilities of this new show and the characters," he says. "So we're hesitant to make any grand proclamations. As I said, we're trying to get some more action and adventure in there. We would like to introduce some more aliens, good and bad, and it will be fun to chart the alien landscape a little more and define the delta quadrant to some extent. Really, we're always on the look-out for the special, brand new concept that is always waiting around the corner."

Reflecting on the busy year Braga has had, he is most proud of his achievement on *Star Trek: Generations*, which has grossed over $100 million at the box office internationally, and which successfully managed to bring *The Next Generation* crew to the big screen, despite some naysayers' predictions that their big-screen voyage would be a bust.

"I just watched it again on video recently and it's better than I remember," says Braga, who co-wrote the script with Ronald D. Moore. "I think we wrote an epic, sweeping *Star Trek* story and accomplished some major things. We reinvented the franchise a little bit, which I think every *Trek* movie should do.

"There were a lot of people complaining that we changed too much and, 'Why did you destroy the Enterprise?' But you know, when the story was on the air, it was like living with your family. Now that they're into movies, it's like seeing your family every couple of years at Christmas—and things change. Things *should* change. When you do a big motion picture, big things should happen. I was happy with the effort, though we did perhaps get a little too ambitious in its complexity, trying to tie up the original series' crew and Data's emotions. I don't think it was disastrous, though. I think the greatest shame was that some viewers, who had never seen *Star Trek*, were confused."





Braga is dismissive of those fans who found Data's "emotion-chip" to be a violation of the character. "Fans are funny that way," he says. "A lot of them would enjoy a film if it was just Data sitting there emotionless and saying nothing; while some will hate it no matter what you do. What's there not to enjoy? I think the best response we got was that it's a really fun movie. And some people have comments and concerns that they didn't like what we did. A lot of Internet fans seem to be very bitter; some-



times I wonder why they're watching. It's the 'I hate *Star Trek*' gang. It seems like you can't do anything right for those people."

Of course Braga includes the complaints about *Voyager* in that category as well, noting that the fans' most frequent criticism of the show happens to be that they feel it's a derivative of *The Next Generation*. "Having served on *TNG* for some time, as have many of the writers on the new show, I think no one is more aware of the similarities than us," he says. "And I'm not going to say there aren't some dramatic similarities, but with everything else we're very careful at not doing what we've done before."

With Braga and Moore preparing the script for a second *Generations* (which, he confirms, will deal with the Borg and will be shooting in 1996), and with another season of *Voyager* just around the corner, the remainder of the year looks very busy for Braga. Nevertheless, he's grateful to be part of a television legacy that's lasted for thirty years.

"It's a major force, and it continues," says Braga. "I think it's amazing that the people you meet are so passionate about it, and that they spend years of their lives interested in it. I'm always discovering new reasons why people like *Star Trek*. And I think the real fans get poked fun at a lot, and the conventions are ridiculed, but all I can say is, better obsessed with the show than with something that can destroy your life. When I see the fans at the conventions, there are many families that go together. It's a rare occasion to see children and their parents sharing the same interests, and that, to me, is the greatest thing any show could hope to do."

All eighty of the Star Trek *series will air exclusively on Sci Fi Channel from September 1998.*□

Opposite, Kate Mulgrew as the indomitable Captain Janeway. Above, Neelix leads Paris, Janeway, Chakotay and Tuvok to the Kazon-Ogla settlement in The Caretaker.

Screamers: *science fiction with substance? Director Christian Duguay interviewed.*

MAN AND MACHINE

BY ED FLIXMAN

IN A 1977 ANTHOLOGY OF HIS BEST SHORT fiction, Philip K. Dick wrote that his story "Second Variety" was the fullest expression of his "grand theme—who is human and who only appears (masquerades) as human. Unless we can individually and collectively be certain of the answer to this question, we face what is, in my view, the most serious problem possible. Without answering it adequately, we cannot even be certain of our own selves."



This theme, also very important in *Blade Runner* and the story it was drawn from ("Do Androids Dream



A military scientist stationed on a distant mining colony, Colonel Henriksson (Peter Weller, inset) faces human extinction at the hands of his own creation, a breed of robot (left) that has learned to rebuild itself with ever increasing sophistication.



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The Cover: Star Trek: Voyager*'s Captain Janeway (Kate Mulgrew), and* The X-Files *agents Scully (Gillian Anderson) and Mulder (David Duchovny).*

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One size fits none



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of Electric Sheep?"), was not a matter of worry to Dick simply due to the implications of artificial intelligence; his concerns were seldom directed to hard science and its imagined futures—in fact, the "science" in Dick's fiction often takes the form of quasi-magical electronic gizmos, seldom explained in the rational terms used by a Clarke or an Asimov.

"Second Variety" was written in 1952, a period notorious for anti-Communist hysteria. For its time, the story's depiction of the aftermath of a Soviet-American war that had devastated Earth, and a handful of combatants—both Russian and American—who band together in an effort to survive the final weapon, was bold political writing, made safe by the cloak of fantasy.

Jump to the summer of 1995. Director Christian Duguay has just finished the editing of *Screamers*, the film adaptation of "Second Variety." Effects shots—over 140 of them—are still being combined with some shots, but as these come in, the raw footage is being replaced by the finished shot. And everything is working, he tells us.

"Everything was storyboarded in great detail, and extremely well-planned," says DuGuay. "What is surprising is seeing that it all works, and seeing that the blend of these elements works so that you don't say: 'Oh, look at that matte, isn't that a great matte?' The film works dramatically, so you're too involved to even see the matte—this is simply the setting for the story. For me that's one of the keys to this film. For all the CGI in this film, there's no 'video game' to any of it.

"The special effects are not there for esthetics or for dressing; they are there because we have a story to tell, and they are well-blended with the line of the story, which I am really proud of. The problem with a lot of these films is that the machinery becomes so huge that the story itself gets flattened by the weight of it and becomes one-dimensional."

Duguay's complaint could be a hopeful sign for Philip Dick's fans; the word "multi-dimensional" fits Dick's work quite well. And, though most films based on Dick's work have been more "inspired by" their sources rather than "adapted from" them, the films *Blade Runner*, *Total Recall*, and *Confessions of a Crap Artist* have each done some share of justice to one of SF's most complex artists; so far, Dick has been treated with more regard than the vast majority of SF writers to be received by Hollywood.

And, to read Tristar's production notes, it seems that *Screamers* is the most faithful Dick adaptation to date, though "there are changes," says Duguay. "You really have to both read the story and see the film to see what we've changed, and to make your judgments on that."

One obvious change is the screenplay's transformation of the "cold war" elements, and an additional layer of betrayal not found in Dick's story. Most of these additions were done in a redrafting of Dan O'Bannon's original screenplay by Miguel Tejada-Flores, under the supervision of Duguay.

"I make it a point to become very involved in the script of any film that I am making," says Duguay. He tells us that it's a lesson he learned when tackling his first feature work, the visually interesting but abysmally scripted *Scanners II* and *Scanners III*.

"Cronenberg [writer-director of *Scanners*]





The initial scheme was to shoot the entire film within a sand pit (as at left), with CGI effects to fill in the surroundings. Above, Henrickssson, Becker (Roy DuPuis), and Ace (Andy Lauer).

always comes in on a film and gives it his own atmosphere and his own take on the subject matter. The scripts for *Scanners II* and *III* took the basic premise of telepathic powers, but had nothing much more to it than that. It being my first chance to direct a feature, I didn't have as much input as I now insist on—and it ended up being a type of film that I'm happy to say I have nothing more to do with. But for me, it was a start."

After a similarly abysmal experience on the Pierce Brosnan "mad bomber" movie *Live Wire*, Duguay came to a moment of decision. "I determined to change my style totally; I told the people I'd been working with that this was not the type of film I wanted to do. I went back and did some television, went up the ladder again, very quickly, doing only character-driven shows." *Screamers* is Duguay's return to theatrical features after a string of well-received television films, including the recent period miniseries *Million Dollar Babies*, an emotionally charged examination of the exploited lives of Canada's Dionne Quintuplets.

"Before, very often my intuition would tell me there's something not working here, and people would say, 'No, it's fine, it works.' Now I trust my own instinct, and I just put my foot down—if it's not working, don't ask me to go out there and shoot a scene; not if I don't see the whole arc of the character and the story. Since I came to that, it's been wonderful."

As for Duguay's willingness to tamper with O'Bannon's screenplay, Duguay offers, "Dan O'Bannon wrote a great script. But it was written twelve years ago.

"I went all the way back, through all the drafts of the script. The later drafts struck me as too exploitative. O'Bannon did a really good job, his script provided a strong dramatic structure, though we did alter the structure a bit; some of the ideas in the script he'd since used in other films, I didn't want to be redundant, so we changed some things there.

"As I went back through the different versions of the script, and back to the story itself, what really impressed me the most was Dick's story. What I liked in the story was that it had a very strong atmosphere, a strong dramatic line, but also at moments the narrative would stop to put across this totally desolated environment.

"O'Bannon did a great adaptation, but the story had elements that he had not used at all. A whole sense of despair, and a whole philosophy. I don't know if you've read any Jean-Paul Sartre, but his novel *La Mort Dans L'Ame* is a similar take on a dark future that has no path forward, no light, and how that world affects its people, and we injected a little bit more of that into it. And we tried to play with some values regarded as universal, and distort them a bit."

Peter Weller's work in such films as *Buckaroo Banzai*, *Robocop* and *Naked Lunch* mark him as perhaps the most intense actor to show a continued interest in SF roles. He plays Colonel Joseph Hendricksson, the commander of a handful of Alliance soldiers still surviving on Sirius 6B, a mining colony planet, after ten years of ruthless, savage war. The war is at last winding down as the screamers, cybernetic killers that Hendricksson helped design, decimate the enemy. Duguay credits Weller with taking the film to "the next level" with an exceptional performance.

"I didn't know at first about Peter," he says. "I wasn't sure. It sounded good, and I enjoyed his performances in other films. But I'd heard that Peter can be 'difficult.' Well, he was a puppy with me, once he saw that I could talk with him about the character and seemed to know my stuff.

"It turned out that the casting of Peter, put together with what was in the Dick story, triggered a process that created a very rich character. I don't think we could have had anything like it, if some 'action star' had been







cast in the role. Peter totally got into the role and brought some great things to it. You've gotta see him in this—it's mind-blowing."

Of Jennifer Rubin, who plays Jessica, a hardened black marketeer (the equivalent of Tasso, a Russian prostitute, in Dick's story), the director says, "Jennifer brought in the mystery that I wanted from that character. She really understood what I wanted very well, and seemed to have a lot of fun doing it, too."

Andy Lauer, who co-stars with Lea Thompson in the television sitcom *Caroline in the City*, functions as the film's comedy relief. "I didn't want anyone in that role who would be too out there, over-goofing it," says Duguay. "I wanted someone who would inhabit the character. Andy, being a smaller kind of guy, it seems reasonable that he'd have the kind of complex that makes him the really gung-ho character whose view of things completely clashes with Hendrickson, and that chemistry worked."

Roy DuPuis, who plays Becker, previously worked with Duguay in the lead role of Oliva Dionne in *Million Dollar Babies*. "Roy is a good friend," says Duguay, "and probably the best Canadian actor around."

Much of the filming for *Screamers* took place last winter, on location in a sand pit about twenty minutes outside of Montreal. Computer graphics imaging were used to replace Canada's winter skies, and to place a bunker in the dunes.

"At one point, we were supposed to shoot everything in the sand pit," says Duguay. "I said, 'Guys, you can't shoot everything in the sand pit—they'd kill themselves, having to create everything from scratch in CGI.' It occurred to me that we had some wonderful old cement plants around there, so we sent a scout around to photograph all the cement plants.

"We found one burnt out cement plant, where the concrete was totally scorched in this weird way, with algae growing on it, and the algae totally dead, as we were shooting in the middle of winter; and the light would hit it in a certain way—it was great." The ruins of the cement plant became the base upon which the CGI team at Buzz FX created the devastated mining colony.

Both winter locations offered their difficulties. "The sand pit was actually the nicest, even though it got to minus twenty-five and minus thirty centigrade. Where it got really bad was when we shot all night long in the cement factory, where we had to wear masks to keep the dust out of our lungs, and people started to get sick. When you go down into these cement tunnels, and it's really humid, the cold really goes straight to your bone, because they just radiate the cold.

"So there were extremely difficult condi-



With a spacecraft the only means of escape (above left, rendered by animator Yanick Dussault), and with comrades shorting out (left), Hendricksson and his companions fend off another assault of screamers.

tions, but we went in with a vision, something that I tried to inject into every aspect of the picture and share with all of the cast and crew. So, even when it was down and dirty, when you see that there is a vision that is starting to materialize in the work, and you see the actors getting into it to produce an elaborately choreographed scene, and get it just right, the people on set can't help but smile and show their enthusiasm."

Duguay is currently considering two offers of work, one on a major action-adventure film, the other for a SF film of somewhat larger scope than *Screamers*. When asked if he enjoys working on science fiction, his answer is typically thoughtful: "I like working on science fiction when there is a philosophy behind it," he says. "Science fiction, for me, is not hardware and fights; it's the future, and the ways that technology, in the service of man, is helping him, or helping to detroy him. The effects technology we have now can help us explore all aspects of life and really let our imagination explode.

"Because I know it pretty well, I can have a vision, put it on paper, choreograph it, and then be extremely patient on set, and let it grow slowly. You have to have ways to communicate that vision to everyone in all the departments, make sure that everyone is working on the same one vision. And yes, I love doing that very much.

"I'm very proud of *Screamers*, and I guess the box offices will tell us whether it meets the taste of the audience; it's got a background, it's got a whole philosophy behind it, and that's what I really tried to inject in it.

"But it's scary; You look at the new films coming out; they don't give any past, background or character to their leads. I was so disappointed when I went to see *Species*, where you've got a great effin' cast, and they just don't know where to go with their roles; they're just walking through it, with no motivation to any of it. You go see *Johnny Mnemonic*, and you say, 'Wow—what is going on here?' Visually great—but that's it. *Batman*, beautiful. But you have a hero in a precarious position, and you wish he might think a little bit, not push a button to get out of it.

"But, who am I, a small Canadian director, to question these big films?"

Who indeed? We'll all have a better grip on that question when *Screamers* opens on October 20.



Agents Provocateur: Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) and Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson).

Chris Carter and his team of award-winning writer-producers prepare a brand new season of the best drama on television

The Truth is Out There

BY LISA MACCARILLO

NOW IN PRODUCTION ON ITS THIRD SEASON, *THE X-FILES* remains a television anomaly. A show which quietly entered prime time nearly dead last on Neilson's ratings system, Twentieth Century Fox's hour-long production has risen faster in one season than any other prime time show and now commands not only its time slot, but a legion of mainstream critics who say it's the best drama on television. A solid second season, which saw the departure of some of the show's tried and true writer-producers (though many, such as Howard Gordon, Rob Bowman and Kim Manners, remain) as well as the introduction of several hand-picked





Top, In last season's premiere episode Little Green Men, *Mulder's declining sense of purpose was given a boost by a close encounter. Above,* Fresh Bones *led Scully and Mulder to a camp for Haitian refugees, a voodoo priest and a murder-minded military man. Right, Duchovny and Carter relax between takes.*

new writers (including Sara Charno, Frank Spotnitz, and Darin Morgan), helped elevate the Vancouver-based production from its early cult status to a mainstream hit — all without a single compromise in the unparalleled quality which is the show's trademark.

At this year's Golden Globes, *The X-Files*' creator and co-executive producer Chris Carter sat at a table with his actors and producers waiting to hear who would win the award for Best Drama. "I feel we were the gap-toothed kid in that crowd," says Carter. "We were all a little giddy about even being there. To be nominated was a big surprise, so I thought that was enough. When they came to our category, I got a tightness across my chest. I had written my speech about ten minutes before I left the house, sitting in my underwear before I put my tux on, figuring I'd never have to read it. And then they announced that *The X-Files* had won—except that I didn't hear it announced. All I realized is that everyone at our table leapt up. Immediately I got out from behind the table. I don't remember it; if you look at the tape, you see them trying to shake my hand, but I was too stunned. I was transported to the stage. I don't remember exactly getting up there onstage. I always wonder how when people go to accept awards they don't trip going up the stairs. I didn't trip somehow; I can't tell you why. And I got up on the stage and I looked down, and there's Elton John to the left of me and Diana Ross to the right of me, and the reality just slapped me in the face.

"I read that speech and I knew that if we won, the thing I must do is not give some eloquent speech, but just thank everybody who I felt was really responsible for making this show a big hit, and that's what I did. And I think I read off forty minutes worth in thirty seconds. It felt great to be, first of all, included with those shows because those are all such top-quality shows, but winning was a huge surprise. It was a huge shock."

It has been three years since Carter first sold the idea of two FBI agents, one a believer, the other a skeptic, to Fox. Carter's intention was to reveal Agent Mulder's (David Duchovny) world of shadowy, manipulative government powers and unexplainable occurrences through the unclouded eyes of Agent Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson), an accredited medical doctor initially assigned to "debunk" the X-Files. Now, going into its third season, the





lines have blurred, and both Scully and Mulder have become less certain of themselves, a little rougher around the edges, and less likely to trust. Thanks to exceptional writing, their caring but platonic relationship seems based not only on mutual respect, but also on genuine trust — a dramatic, possibly intentional contrast to the other relationship in the show: that between the people and their government, which is based on more Orwellian concepts.

Arguably unique in today's bottom-line programming are the standards Carter and his team hold to their stories. Each Friday, viewers have come to expect a self-contained "little movie" during which they will be asked not only to find the questions posed by each episode, but to find the answers or absence of answers. That vision doesn't always jibe with more earthly concerns. "There's a trick to doing this hour drama," Carter says in a voice that sounds accustomed to contemplating puzzles. "It's finding the rhythms, knowing where to spend and expend energy, that's the real critical thing. And I feel that going into year three, I know how to do that. The challenges are always finding the great visual in which to anchor an episode, visual theme, visual tricks, computer-generated images, production images; how to contain an episode and make it doable in eight days is a real trick, too. We got a little ambitious a couple times last year and got ourselves into hot scheduling water. It wears on everybody. Those are the challenges, to figure out how to do a little movie in eight days for the money and make it as interesting as we possibly can. Inside of that are all the other challenges, makeup, lighting, acting, character choices, casting choices, like that."

Last season saw some of the most daring programming on TV, partially due to the writer/producers' self-confessed need to "one-up" each other, and partially due to the pregnancy of actress Gillian Anderson. "Duane Barry," which Carter wrote and directed, featured Steve Railsback (best known for playing charismatic madman Charles Manson in the TV movie *Helter Skelter*) as a mental hospital escapee and former FBI Agent who may or may not be repeatedly abducted by aliens. At the close of the episode, Barry kidnaps Scully with the intention of bringing her to the abduction site to be taken in his place. It was the first of a two-parter in which Scully is abducted—whether by aliens or the secret government is left for the viewer to decide — and facilitated a few days off for Anderson, who gave birth to a daughter, Piper, on September 24, 1994.

Another of the season's most compelling episodes was the season finale, "Anasazi." Carter's teleplay leaves Mulder in a boxcar which is exploded by the operatives headed by Cancer Man (the stunningly appropriate William B. Davis). Though he's already written the season opener, Carter is patently close-lipped about how Mulder will escape the blast, assuring us that we'd rather see it happen than hear about it.

Though fans might disagree, Carter still feels some aspects of the second season could have been improved upon, which serves to drive him and his crew all the harder. "I'd like to hit a thousand this year," he says. "I'd like to have every episode be a winner, so that we actually make the show better. We'll do twenty-four episodes this season and I want to do twenty-four very, very scary episodes. I think that we had a really good year two, but there were probably three or four episodes that fell short of our expectations."

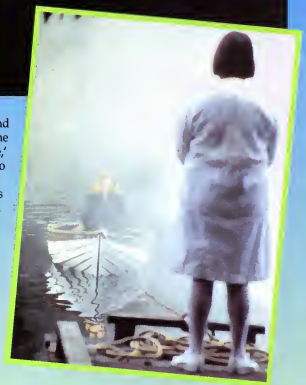
The *XF* crew mirrors Carter's own perfectionism and work ethic, what he calls "teaching by example. There have been very few political problems, hierarchical, boss/worker problems. I think that's because we really set a tone. If you work hard, everyone else works hard too."

The *XF* parent, Twentieth Century Fox TV, has also shown a tremendous respect for the integrity of Carter's creation. "They've been extremely supportive from the beginning, even though there were some hard-fought battles and some really tedious arguments about certain things," he notes. "There are always budgetary struggles, and those still exist. It's not like this big money's opened up and we can do whatever we want—far from that."

Despite budgetary concerns, Vancouver winters and various other stumbling blocks, Carter has received nothing but positive feedback from his cast and crew. "Actors, almost to a man, have come back saying, 'It's the nicest group of people I've ever worked with or for; you've got a great organization—can I come back?' And usually they're dead, so they can't. That's the environment up there."

Carter, a former editor and screenwriter, says his life hasn't changed much since *XF*'s popularity began to snowball ("I eat at my desk a lot more," he says wryly.). Unlike Duchovny, who has become a true sex symbol for the '90s, the ruggedly handsome 37-year-old maintains a pleasurable anonymity, which he attributes to his notion that he takes "bad pictures."





Above, a graveyard meeting among followers of a boy with uncanny powers in Miracle Man. *Right, Scully's near-death experience with an angelic nurse in* One Breath. *The cinematography for this episode brought the* X-Files *one of its six Emmy nominations this year.*

That may be changing. This past year, Carter attended some of the first official *XF* conventions, an experience which he describes as "both wonderful and weird.... I love what I do, and I love being able to get up there and talk about what I do. I think it's amazing that people actually flock to these things to be a part of whatever this TV show has become. I'm not a stand-up comic, and I'm not an impresario. I'm not anything but the guy who created *The X-Files*, happy to answer any question I possibly can about it, so it's great for me. I've gotten terrific feedback, so people seem to like to hear me talk about it. It's not something you ever imagine yourself doing."

Both at conventions and on the Internet, where *XF* activity has reached a fever pitch, Carter hopes to temper bad rumors with facts: That David Lynch will direct a crossover episode involving Agent Cooper is an "unfounded rumor." William Gibson, however, the best-selling and critically acclaimed cyberpunk visionary responsible for *Neuromancer*, among other projects, will write an episode. "He approached us because his daughter was a big fan and she wanted to come to the set one day, and we said sure," says Carter. "Gibson came in and he was a big *X-Files* fan, and he said, 'I'd love to do one of these,' and we said, 'We'd love you to do one,' and so we're doing it."

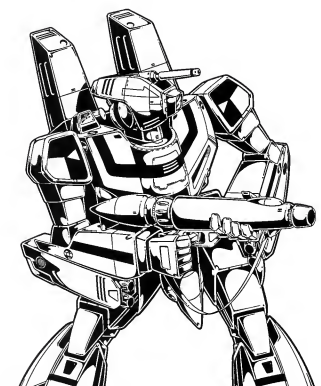
And the long-rumored *X-Files* "spin-off" is indeed in the works. "I had a discussion today with Peter Roth, the president of Twentieth Television, about it," he says. "It wouldn't be a spin-off per se; it would probably be more of a complimentary piece." An *XF* movie also is definitely in its planning stages, but Carter doesn't want to distract himself too much from his first love, which is the show, which he says he'll stick with "as long as I can."

Carter plans to direct more episodes. His collaboration with Duchovny on last season's "Colony" may also lead to more conceptual work with the actor. "That's a fun thing to do since we're friends," says Carter. "So, I hope so. He and I have co-authored ideas. I write the scripts; we work on the stories together. He lives at the beach; I don't. I was at his house the other night. He likes living at the beach. He was a lifeguard, but he thinks the water's too dirty in Malibu." Perhaps there's an X-File in the making.

Going into its third year, *The X-Files* has kept to its original promise to explore the realm of extreme possibility while remaining firmly rooted in reality. It has escaped pigeonholing, without broadening into the kind of self-parody which many critics feel entrapped by its spiritual forefather, *The Night Stalker*. And despite the intense chemistry between the show's principals, Carter insists there are no plans of turning their whisper of intimacy into any form of romantic or sexual contact.

The truth is still out there; the question is: Will we ever find out what it is? "No. Definitely not," he says. "I don't think that you ever know the truth. There is no truth. The truth is a hundred, a thousand, a million different things. The truth is like Rashomon. For every person, there's a different truth."

Trust no one. □



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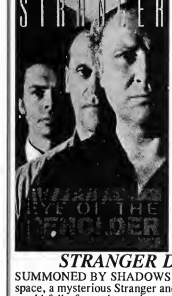
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THE COLLABORATIVE nature of television often defeats the attempt to bring the distilled vision of a single individual to the small screen. On the rare occasion when it works, the result is often something built to last, as with Rod Serling's *Twilight Zone*, or Gene Roddenberry's *Star Trek*.

"Joseph Straczynski's *Babylon-5*" may not come so trippingly off the tongue, but as the show continues to unfold its five-year saga, a growing audience has found that this is not "television as usual." Each episode, though



The Heavy Cruiser **Agamemnon** *is under Captain Sheridan's command during Earth's near-suicidal war with the Minbari aliens.*

Pay no attention to that man behind the curtain.... Joe Straczynski on creating the universe of **Babylon-5.**

Let There be LIGHT Let There be SHADOWS



Dr. Franklin (Richard Biggs), Commander Ivanova (Claudia Christian), Captain Sheridan (Bruce Boxleitner), and Security Officer Garibaldi (Jerry Doyle) make a startling discovery aboard The Copernicus, *a seemingly abandoned "sleeper" ship in "The Long Dark." Opposite, Na'Kal, a Narn warleader, as seen in "The Fall of Night," an episode promising the revelation of Kosh, and the shattering conclusion to the Narn-Minbari War.*

plotted to stand as a single narrative, also advances a broader story—not just a timeline, but a sprawling, novelistic saga with varied themes, subplots, and points of view.

This broader narrative will reach its midpoint in the coming season, and currently things are heating up considerably on *B-5*. Most notably, the episode "The Coming of Shadows" marked the beginning of what may become a war between all known races of the galaxy and an ancient species known only as the Shadows. Our last, best hope may be an alliance with the enigmatic Vorlon species...but, despite the presence of the Vorlon character Kosh since the premier episode, we don't even know what a Vorlon is.

Those with access to the Internet can find a wealth of background on the series; the best starting place is the lively Usenet newsgroup rec.arts.tv.babylon-5. And a vast trove of information can be explored in *The Lurker's Guide To Babylon-5* on the World-Wide Web (http://www.hyperion.com/lurk/).

SF ENTERTAINMENT: *When you conceived* B-5, *did you figure on getting this far?*

JOSEPH M. STRACZYNSKI: You have to understand the way my brain works, a dark and scary thing on the best of days. When I came up with this in 1986, I said at that time, I will write the screenplay, I will get that screenplay produced as a pilot, I will get the series, it will run for five years, and I will get off the stage. I never considered odds; I said *this is going to happen*. I didn't know it was going to take five years to get it started. It's been an exercise in sheer force of will.

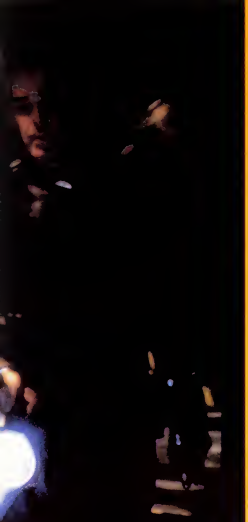
I don't even allow any other possibilities in my head. It's like standing in front of a long train with a chain on your back, pulling for five years, until it starts to move. For one brief period, you and the train are moving at the same speed...and then the train starts chasing you. That's about where I am right now with the story line.

SFE: *The way the storythreads interweave and resonate—was that part of the first conception?*

JMS: Foreshadowing is a technique that's not much used in series television—there's a lot of retro-continuity, where you write episode 16 to conform to facts established in episode 14. But to write something for episode 9 that won't be referred to again for a year is pretty much unheard of.

Usually you structure a show around an hour, not around two years, or five years. There's stuff in the first season of *Babylon-5* that serves its own narrative purpose, but will become far more relevant four years from now. As you go along, it gains depth. That was always at the core of the concept.

I grew up a fan—reading Ray Bradbury's





The Martian Chronicles, a series of individual stories which, together, create a large tapestry. E.E. "Doc" Smith's *Lensman* books, *Childhood's End*, the *Foundation* novels, *Lord of the Rings*, *Dune*, are all sagas of that nature.

Looking at the SF shows that were done, I asked, why hasn't anyone in American television created an honest-to-god, literary-structured saga? And the only reason is that no one has done it. So, as a thought experiment, I asked myself, if I were to do that, *how* would I do it? What would it be, and how would I structure it? I began putting together the pieces; that melded into another thought-experiment I had, which had to do with the way television is made—that about 30 percent of the budget of any television show is wasted. So this came out of those two ideas, to find a means to marry these two concepts.

SFE: *Renewal came more easily this year, thanks to improved ratings....*

JMS: The ratings have improved, and the demographics are amazing, which makes the advertisers and the network very happy.

SFE: *When the show was struggling I imagine the TV-heads saying, "Joe, why don't you do a nice space show —bad bad guys and good good guys. Let the audience know what to expect."*

JMS: No one ever broached that; no one ever said, "Listen, you should pull back on this arc nonsense and just give us regular stories." That's why it took so long to get this series started in the first place; it took us five years to find people who understood exactly what it was we were trying to accomplish, and would sign on for that task of telling this larger story, in the way it needed to be told. So that has never come up.

SFE: *Your experience stands in sharp contrast to Harlan Ellison's well-known TV battles.*

JMS: Remember, it took five years to find these guys.

SFE: *Speaking of Mr. Ellison, he is credited as "Conceptual Consultant." What does that mean?*

JMS: Harlan's involvement is as peripatetic as Harlan himself; he is allowed to insert himself into the process wherever he chooses. He's advised on costumes, on sets, he's come in on the meetings with writers. His description of the job is that he's the mad dog nipping at my heels; I think of him as my Jiminy Cricket; a free-floating agent of chaos who, having been through such experiences as *The Starlost*, can help me avoid the pitfalls. And his job is to be honest with me, because when you are a television producer, people are very seldom about to tell you, "Joe, it sucks." You need someone around you who will do that, as in the old Roman tradition—the conquering hero returns to Rome, garlands are being lain upon him, but he has someone at his shoulder to say, "Fame is fleeting. You, too, will die."

That's Harlan's job, to be the honest opinion that I need; he's never pulled his punches and never will. He created the character of the ombudsman, helped to write the opening narration. He's contributed in many ways, but always around the corners, because he knows the story is my story; but his contributions have been very helpful in making the story richer and deeper.

SFE: *After an extremely varied background as a writer; you now have this massive commitment to a television series. Do you miss the variety?*

JMS: I'm single-minded in some ways. When I'm of a mind to do something, I'll stick with it. I knew what the job consisted of when I took it. The only problem was when, after five years of development—when I could have gotten any number of mainstream shows going—people around me were saying, "Joe, it ain't gonna happen." Even my agent was saying, "Give it up." But I couldn't do that. And then, of course, it *did* happen, and things have been great since.

And the show is not the same; the show of the second year is not the same show we were doing the first year, and the *Babylon-5* we'll be doing three years from now won't be at all like the first-year show. As well, each episode is very different from every other episode—some are very dark, some very character-oriented, some have huge action set-pieces. What's great is that I've done comedy, I've done action, I've done drama,





Ivanova, Centauri Ambassador Londo (Peter Jurasik), his aide Vir (Stephen Furst), Minbari Ambassador Delenn (Mira Furlan), and Garibaldi partake in a Centauri religious festival in "The Parliament of Dreams." A miracle of twenty-fourth century Centauri technology, the jumpgate that makes B-5 a crossroads of the galaxy.

and I can take that diverse background and apply it all to this one, very diverse series.

SFE: *Four episodes this season are being held back to fall. Why? Isn't it a pain in the butt?*

JMS: A major pain in the butt. We and *Voyager* are doing the same thing, as it turns out. The new season begins, traditionally, in November. What happens usually is that we, and the *Trek* shows, only show four to six new episodes, then go back into reruns—so that, while we build ratings through that early part of the season, the reruns come in and you get cut off at the legs.

So they figured, let's back this up a little, let's start with episodes in October, get the momentum going, hit bigger with the first third-season episodes, and build, presumably, to larger ratings. From the numbers perspective, it makes sense. From a creative point of view, I was on the roof with a high-powered gun. But what are ya gonna do?

SFE: *I'd think that would play havoc with the season's rhythm, judging from last year's closer.*

JMS: It wasn't as big a cliffhanger this year, but I did reveal Kosh, which was enough to keep people talking for a couple of months.

SFE: *Your commitment* B-5 *seems unprecedented—writing 15 out of 22 scripts this season, with an active hand in most aspects of the show...*

JMS: I'm involved in *every* aspect—costuming, prosthetics, computer design, casting, everything.

SFE: *And you're also deeply involved in the* B-5 *comics and novels. Where does it stop?*

JMS: You have to understand that this is my story and my baby, and you have to keep in mind that I am a pain in the ass—very stubborn—and like to have my own way.

My sense is that often, when a franchise is created, stuff is approved and just tossed out there to make money; it isn't part of the show. When I talked to DC, I wanted to do something that would really feed into the show, be part and parcel of it. The fans know that this stuff has passed through my hands, that it's approved at the highest possible level of the show's creative staff; not by some flunky in an office who stamps it "authorized."

I don't want to create an empire, I want to tell my story, and create a few ancillary things because they are the particular things that I want. As for where it stops, there are a number of places where it has stopped, where I didn't think it was worth my time to do certain things, and I've just said "pass."

Currently, I'm writing a four-issue story for the comic to tie directly into the third season, introducing a character who will be prominent through the season—providing that character's back-story and so on. The character will go from Minbar to Narn to Earth to *Babylon-5*. You'll see the entire *B-5* universe through his eyes. It's a wonderful opportunity to do something we can't do in the show, because it would cost $10 billion.

SFE: *You count yourself as an atheist, yet spiritual matters often set the show's theme.*

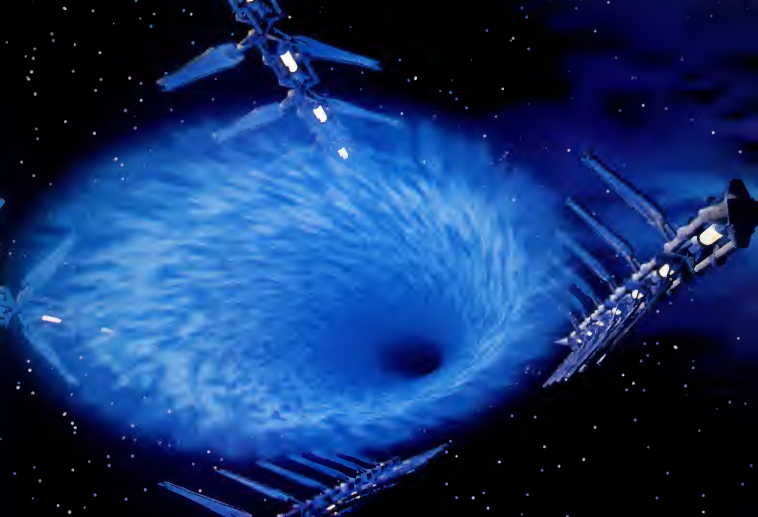
JMS: The writer's job is to be as honest as he can in his characterizations and his storytelling. As I look at the long parade of human history, religion has not gone away in the past 4,000 years of recorded history, nor does it show any sign of doing so any time soon.

Looking at the world 250 years from now, I have to say that people will still believe, and I must treat that with respect—the same way I'd deal with scientific concepts. Because, truthfully, science and religion are two sides of the same coin. The methodology is vastly different. One relies on faith, the other relies on scientific method; both are endeavors to understand who we are, how we got here, where we are going, and what we are here to do. I approach both with equal respect.

I have a background in religious studies, a minor in philosophy from Northern California State, majors in psychology, sociology and literature. I've always been intrigued by humanity's relationship to the mirror, its effort to come to grips with itself, the only known species to ask, "Who am I?" My job is to explore that on every level, within the aspect of each individual character. It all informs the core theme of *Babylon-5*, which, taken down to one sentence, is a question: "Will you lead or will you be led by others?"

SFE: *Matters of self-knowledge, which I guess is the atheist's best possible definition of "spirit."*

JMS: It comes down to the examined life versus the unexamined life, and so much of contemporary society is bent on distracting us from our own lives, with television, or the latest movie craze or something else. There's



always that opportunity to be distracted, each moment of your life. This show tries to ask questions. We don't provide answers; my job is to start discussions, start arguments, start bar fights. If I do that, I've done my job.

SFE: *You've hinted at changes coming in the season's last four episodes. Will the third season shows continue that pace?*

JMS: No, because you have to do these things by degrees. The stuff that we do in the last four is pretty major stuff; we're going to take a breather from that with several more character-oriented episodes. And then, about mid-season, we're going to pull a biggie; there's a structural change in the entire core of the *Babylon-5* universe. The closest equivalent I can imagine—not a one-to-one correspondence, but just to convey the magnitude of the change—suppose, when you turned on *Star Trek*, you found that Starfleet has just been bought by Klingons, and the *Enterprise* must now serve the Klingon Empire. Not just for an episode—that's what the show *is*, from that point on. It's a change of that magnitude. I'm going to lead up to that with several nice, quiet, polite episodes; get up behind 'em and whap 'em real hard.

SFE: *You told Warner Brothers you're going to turn* Babylon-5 *upside down. They said, "Joe, that sounds great," and clapped you on the back?*

JMS: Well, yeah. Their jaws dropped. They said, "You're really gonna do that?" And they started to get excited about it. They knew what the first three-year structure was supposed to be; the first year was sort of galloping around the galaxy, the second year was our guys take it on the chin—they did a lot to our guys, things didn't go too well for them at all—and the third year is our guys fight back. That's the first three years, and they knew that. And when I said, "bah-de-bah..." the room went wild.

SFE: *You've said that characters will die before the show completes its run—unexpectedly, as in real life. Is anyone's fate coming up soon?*

JMS: Perhaps.

SFE: That's better than a "no comment."

JMS: When does this hit the newsstand?

SFE: In early September...

JMS: Then I can't tell you. [pause] But some stuff will happen even before this season's up.... We could lose a couple of characters. In a really permanent way.

SFE: *That's a shame. I hope not, 'cause I love all the characters.... I hope they all live long and, well, not prosper exactly....*

[laughter]

JMS: If you recall *The Shining*, and the character played by Scatman Crothers, the one who understood what the "shining" was, and understood the kid; he was the good guy, the guy everyone could rely on, and was set up throughout the movie to be the guy who would save everybody at the end. In the last half hour of the film, he realizes, omigod, something's gone wrong at the hotel—he gets in the snowcrawler, travels through ten miles of ice and snow and blizzard, negotiates this hostile terrain, nothin's gonna stop him, he's chuggin' along. He gets to the door, flings it open, gets an axe in his chest, and dies. And it hits you—here's the guy who was going to be the resolution, and he ain't it, he's lyin' on the floor in his own blood. I've done something similar.

SFE: *Will we see any more of Michael O'Hare [Commander Sinclair in* Babylon-5*'s first sea-*

Continued on page 72

SPACE WAR



BY MELISSA J. PERENSON

Two members of the X-Files' *creative team prepare for battle in television's latest sci-fi saga,* Space: Above and Beyond.

FORGET THE PRIME DIRECTIVE. Peaceful exploration? Passé. As we enter the fall 1995 television season, *everybody's going to war!*

Babylon-5's long-awaited "Shadow war" will arrive with the first episodes of the new season, dealt with elsewhere in this issue. Rick Berman, the ruling power of Paramount's *Star Trek* franchise, has lately been dropping hints about a break in the uneasy peace between the Klingon Empire and the Federation in *Deep Space 9*. And Fox, the network whose sci-fi creations seem to score higher with fans than with their own executives, try again with *Space: Above and Beyond*, a television "war journal" documenting the experiences of a marine squad faced with the threat of an alien aggressor.

Space is a joint effort of Fox and their sister company, Twentieth Television; and is the brain child of Glen Morgan and James Wong, the team behind some of *The X-Files*' most memorable episodes. As writers and producers, Morgan and Wong have developed a reputation for emphasizing character as a primary story-engine, an approach that, it is hoped, will serve both Fox and fans well when applied to the new show.

The year is 2063, and Earth has achieved global peace—and has begun to look in earnest toward the stars. Interplanetary space travel remains primitive, and pioneering colonists are first venturing out to tame the unknown. But Earth gets more than it bargained for when an unknown alien race destroys two colony outposts and decimates the military's most elite squadron. The series will follow one wet-behind-the-ears team of Marine Corps cadets as they find themselves engulfed in the turmoil of a full-scale intergalactic conflict. *Space*, it is expected, will distinguish itself from



Five single-passenger "Hammerhead" fighters fly in tight formation high above their threatened homeworld. Inset: Rodney Rowland as a young recruit on the high frontier, enduring the rigors of interplanetary war.

the competition by jumping headfirst into the highly personal, emotionally charged territory of war.

Space's two-year odyssey from pitch to concept to pilot to broadcast remarkably survived several power shuffles at Fox, with Morgan and Wong sticking to the project like a rider on a bucking horse. One of the keys to the project's survival lay in its timing: one factor that helped ensure the survival of *Space* during this time of turmoil was the extended period of sci-fi mania that accompanied the finale of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, the premiere of the *Generations* film, and the debut of *Star Trek: Voyager*. Throughout that period, *Trek* repeatedly flirted with the idea of intergalactic war, without ever following through, leaving the theme of interplanetary conflict as open, fertile ground for a new series to explore.

The path to the 1995 fall schedule began back in August of 1993 with



Above, alien craft swarm from the motherships. Above opposite, the principal cast of young space Marines, from left: Theresa Wong, Morgan Weisser, Joel de laFuente, Rodney Rowland, Lanei Chapman and Kristen Cloke. Below, an alien, as envisioned by production artist Patrick Tatopoulos.

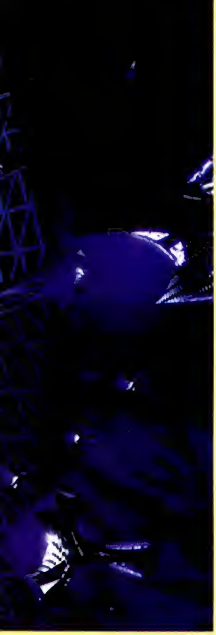
Lucie Salhany, then president of the Fox network. Salhany had been instrumental in giving life to *The Next Generation* during her tenure at Paramount, and, offers Morgan, "I think she knew that the *Star Trek* people were interested in doing *Starfleet Academy* [a *Trek* series concept that never quite came about], so she said let's do that. And we didn't want to, because we didn't want to rip off *Star Trek*. Besides, what do you do in the Academy every week? Then the network said OK, do *Top Gun* in space, and I remember Jim and I walking away from the executive offices going, 'Why us?'" Morgan recalls with a chuckle.

Morgan and Wong, who've been working as creative partners since their college days, took the decidedly uncommon tactic of proposing a war series, something "which we figured was not going to go over too well," Morgan admits. "War's not a popular subject, but at least every week it gives you people who are in a pressure cooker." They were right: Salhany was less than enthusiastic, but Peter Roth, president of production for Twentieth Television, kept the project alive. The project underwent yet another transformation when Salhany was replaced by Sandy Grushow, who liked the concept but encouraged a number of changes to the script. With several rewrites over the course of the regime shifts, the series' premiere is actually the cumulative product of a series of creative regimes.

Space came dangerously close to perishing in "development hell," the limbo of lost creative efforts. "It was just kind of hanging around," recalls Morgan of the script's uncertain status, "and we had rewritten it again at the time when Sandy Grushow was replaced by John Matoian, who honestly was like, well, now there's a glut of these science-fiction things out there and they're not doing that great, so why should we do it? He told us to make sure that *Space* is different."

Matoian proved to be different as well. "Matoian is much more interested in the characters, which is something Jim and I were happy about. We went out of the way not to have what *Babylon 5*, *Earth 2*, and *Star Trek* had. Although they're good series, *Space* is more sweaty, dirty, and military."

While *Star Wars* and *Star Trek* inevitably make the measure for any new entry in the science fiction universe, Morgan chooses to dodge such comparisons. "There's a little bit of both, in a way," he admits, "but to me, *Space* is more like the old war movies, like *Twelve o'Clock High*, *Air Force*,





Sands of Iwo Jima—I wouldn't say *Space* is drawing on science fiction movies as much as it's drawing from the war-era tradition of films." Much of the inspiration for the series, and its stress upon the military angle, stems from Morgan's college studies; specifically a class called "Fiction of War," covering the gamut of classic war novels, from *The Illiad* through *All Quiet on the Western Front*, to *Catch-22*.

Even the evolution of the series' title comes from Morgan and Wong's passion for war sagas. "When we turned it in to the network in January, just as a temporary title we slapped on *Space*, because that's what everybody had been calling it." But Fox's legal department put a damper on that, stating that the title was too general a term for trademark protection; and, besides, there was already a book titled *Space*, by James A. Michener.

"We had all fallen in love with *Space* as a title," says Morgan. "so we went through everything; the cinematographer, David Eggby, came up with 'Above and Beyond,' and we liked that because of the double entendre of it; it sounded like one of those 1940 movies. So we merged the two. And then there's the side benefit of the title's acronym, which sci-fi fans inevitably resort to using." Morgan jokes good-naturedly, "We figure the science fiction fans can put it down as SAAB, so we'll all be SAABs."

It seems like a contradiction in terms to plan a "sweaty" series about war that is slated to air during the 7 p.m. "family" hour on Sunday nights. "I'd thought that Friday night at eight, before *The X-Files*, made sense; we have *The X-Files*' sensibilities. The shows the network tried there previously [*M.A.N.T.I.S.* and *VR-5*] didn't appeal to the intelligence of *The X-Files* audience." The drawbacks to the Sunday slot are well-known in the television industry: competition from the perennial ratings champ *60 Minutes*, the tendency toward football preemptions, and limitations to the degree of violence and language that's permissible in that early hour.



Morgan, while acknowledging the difficulties, remains optimistic. "We'll just do the best we can do. I'm worried about being able to do real, adult stories at that hour. This isn't going to be *Platoon* or anything, but you know, you're in a war. Sometimes you feel that you're the good guy, sometimes you feel you're the bad guy, and other times you're just scared to death. All of those kinds of emotions and thoughts that would accompany a young adult going into battle—revenge, anger, fear. You know those aren't really traditional seven o'clock, Sunday night emotions. But the network said go ahead, so we'll see."

The series swung into preproduction in October 1994, when Morgan and Wong set about finding crew and cast, in that order. For several months, the duo was precariously juggling their duties as co-executive producers on *The X-Files* with their chores on *Space*. "It was very hard. I mean, both positions are a full-time job, like fourteen hours a day. I think Chris [Carter] was a little unhappy about it. But, you

IN THE COURSE OF AN INTERVIEW APPEARING in this issue, Christian Duguay, the director of Tristar's forthcoming film *Screamers*, went a little bit out on a limb:

"It's scary," he said. "You look at the new films coming out, they don't give any past, background or character to their leads. I was so disappointed when I went to see *Species*, where you've got a great effin' cast, and they just don't know where to go with their roles. They're just walking through it, with no motivation to any of it. You go see *Johnny Mnemonic*, and you say, wow—what is going on here? Visually great—but that's it. *Batman*, beautiful. But you have a hero in a precarious position and you wish he might think a little bit, not push a button to get out of it."

Duguay's words will carry a lot more weight if he delivers the ambitious vision he described to me, when *Screamers* opens in October. But, even if that film proves to be less than he promises, his words express a lot of my own misgivings about recent films. *Batman* and *Species* were both high points in an otherwise disappointing summer season; both films are brilliant exercises in the "roller coaster ride" school of filmmaking—what more do you want from a summer blockbuster?

But we all know there is a lot more than a "good ride" to great filmmaking. When you think of the really great SF films—*2001: A Space Odyssey*, *Blade Runner*, *Star Wars*, *Things To Come*, *This Island Earth*...calling any of these films "a ride" is to trivialize them. Every one of these has content more analogous to science fiction literature than to the amusement park. Yet the trend in Hollywood seems to be to pare down, to simplify, and to package an easily digested experience that can be evoked in its entirety via video games, park rides, lunch pail designs and Happy Meals.

There are hopeful signs. Certainly any fan of Philip K. Dick's work will be looking forward to *Screamers* after reading this issue's interview with its director. And there's very strong advance word on *Strange Days*, indicating that it will offer the ambitious cyberpunk worldscape that many of us hoped to see in *Johnny Mnemonic*.

But what I find most encouraging is what's happening on TV. As television faces an audience increasingly fragmented by cable, new competing networks, and the multiple uses of the home entertainment center, television producers have been forced to take more risks in their search for an audience. One result of that search is the recent discovery that the adult audience for science fiction is not an insignificant blip in the ratings.

And, since television budgets can't allow the endless cavalcade of explosions, stunts and effects that drive theatrical blockbusters, SF on TV must take another tack.

As shows like *SeaQuest* and *M.A.N.T.I.S.* have shown, there's little profit in underestimating the intelligence of the SF audience—more recent attempts have displayed a surprising amount of respect for viewers. Sharply drawn characters like *The X-Files*' Scully and Mulder, and engaging concepts like the parallel worlds of *Sliders*, are becoming acknowledged as essential elements for successful SF.

And then there's *Babylon-5* which, as the fully wrought vision of its creator, Joe Straczynski, is introducing new ways of storytelling to the genre. I fully expect that by the time the five-year story arc of *B-5* fully unfolds the eyes of many other creatives in the television industry will be opened to a wide vista of what can be done in series television.

Of course, none of these shows would exist if it weren't for the thirty-year-old creation of Gene Roddenberry, rejuvenated in the form of *Deep Space 9*, *Voyager*, and the newly launched series of *Generations* films. Though, for my taste, the producers sometimes seem a little *too* respectful of Roddenberry's memory to make some of the bold moves that many *Trek* fans would like to see, Brannon Braga's forthright analysis of *Voyagers*' first season in this issue, and the reported changes planned for *Deep Space 9*, are particularly encouraging. (Though I understand the concern of many current *DS9* fans, who are upset that Michael Dorn will "upstage" the established cast members.)

It's a strange turnaround, that quality SF, once more common in films than on television, is almost a daily video staple. And this year's Emmy nominations bear this out, with SF programming vying in twenty different categories (yes, I counted *Tiny Toons Adventures* as "SF"—sue me). Most are technical credits, but it's especially encouraging that this year's acting and writing nominations went to *X-Files*, *The Outer Limits* and *Mystery Science Theater 3000*, and that *X-Files* received a nomination as best dramatic series.

The new TV season is bringing still more SF and fantasy programming. In addition to *Space: Above and Beyond*, Fox will be offering *Strange Luck*; UPN will debut both *Nowhere Man* and *Deadly Games* in the week this issue hits the stands.

Will these new entries continue the trend? We can only hope so. If they do, it's confirmation that Hollywood is starting to get the idea.

—Ed Flixman
flixman@dorsai.org

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VOLUME 2 NUMBER 3

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Score one for Earth! The Hammerhead blasts one alien to kingdom come as another comes on in hot pursuit. Area 51, the top-secret CGI installation whose past credits include VR.5 *and Clive Barker's* Lord of Illusion, *used digital models to create the series' ships and flight sequences.*

know, I don't think we let either show down."

Asking how the duo's experience on *X-Files* might influence *Space* prompts a thoughtful pause. "Things we did on that show we're going to do on this show, in terms of the type of people we've cast, the look of the show, the attitude and, hopefully, plot structure and character development. Just because that's what *we* do.

But there are fundamental differences between the two shows: "*The X-Files* is a more cynical show," says Morgan. "*X-Files* is about wanting to believe; *Space* is about needing to believe. They have a different tone and a different theme."

The pilot began shooting in February at Warner Bros.'s studio facility on Australia's scenic Gold Coast, about an hour south of Brisbane. "The cost of construction there is good, and for a show like this where you build a lot of spaceships and sets, you can't beat it. They've got good production facilities and good crews."

Filming in Australia went a lot smoother than anyone ever expected. Still, says Morgan, "we kind of knew we were doing the impossible. That we were doing a show that had three months' prep, when it should've had six months; that we're doing a show for six and half million when it should've been eight. So everybody was so aware that the impossible was being asked, that everyone got really focused and got the job done—and had a good time doing it."

And it wasn't as though the cast and crew were roughing it in the Australian outback or anything. Tapes of *X-Files* episodes and sports events were shipped over from Los Angeles, "so that we'd all not lose our minds," Morgan says, laughing.

Fox's initial order for the series is twelve episodes. As to be expected from a sci-fi series, special effects are a key element, and computer generated effects by Area 51 represent a good percentage of the show's $1.5 million per episode budget.

As with *The X-Files*, the cast is largely made up of unknowns; this way, says Morgan, "You're not carrying any baggage. You can learn about the characters, and those actors become the characters." The Marine Corps pilot squadron consists of a diverse group of young people, each of whom has their own, very personal reasons for joining the military.

The group is led by Shane Vansen (Kristen Cloke), a young woman whose career choice was directly influenced by her witnessing the brutal wartime murder of her parents, who were also Marines. Nathan West (Morgan Weisser) is suffering from his own, more recent personal tragedy: after being forced to give up his spot on a colonization expedition, Nathan enlists in the military since it's the only way he'll be able to rejoin his colonist girlfriend; but, before the couple can re-unite, her colony is wiped out by the aliens.

Cooper Hawkes (Rodney Rowland) is an "In Vitro"—a member of an artificially bred race, and, like all of his kind, subject to a lifetime of prejudice. Hawkes finds himself in the military as the result of an undeserved brush with the law. Also part of the squadron are Paul Wang (Joel de la Fuente), whose curious nature tends to get him into, but not necessarily out of, trouble; and Vanessa Damphousse (Lanei Chapman), a fighter whose empathetic nature could become a liability in a war. Keeping a watchful eye over the troops is McQueen (James Morrison), the squadron's enigmatic commander, at one time a member of the world's foremost fighting squadron. McQueen is aided by Sergeant Major Frank Bougus (R. Lee Ermey), a tough, by-the-book type, whose austere manner hides his deep concern for the squad.

Between the ensemble cast and its imposing scope, *Space* is a highly ambitious undertaking, and a high-risk enterprise in a high-risk time-slot. Whether *Space: Above and Beyond* goes down in a twelve-week blaze of glory or becomes a multi-year saga of our planet at war, the Morgan-Wong team seems likely to create a war worth watching when hostilities begin on the Fox network. There is a tentative September release date at press time. □

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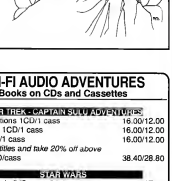
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Continued from page 65

son] in the foreseeable future?

JMS: I've discussed this with Michael, and with Warner, and it's all set up to bring Michael back for a two-parter, about one-third into the third season. It'll clear up everything—for everyone who was wondering, "Gee, I don't see how this fits in," it will suddenly make sense. The question of who is "The One," and questions surrounding *Babylon-4*, will all be dealt with—it's gonna be a corker of a two-parter.

SFE: *When you're not up to your ears in production, you communicate with fans, through GEnie, CompuServe and the Internet. Why?*

JMS: Bear in mind that I come from a background as a fan. My sense as a SF fan is that they tend to be the most exploited group around, told to watch the show, buy the toys, and shut the hell up. Whenever I used to come to conventions, where producers would show up with new shows, they'd say, "It's the best thing since sliced bread. You'll see." Then you see it, it ain't what they promised, and you can't find them to talk about it afterward. You want to hit them with a nerf-bat, but they're gone.

"I've been on-line since 1984; I was one of the first guys on CompuServe. When this show got going, I said, "Should I change this part of my life?" The answer was *no*, why not keep that communication going? A lot of television producers are insulated, they don't get to hear from guys in Iowa or Dubuque, about what they think of their shows. And I think they would profit tremendously from hearing that information. So my decision was to keep that open, to respect the fans, to keep myself honest, to keep me humble. And because, for the last fifteen or twenty years, I've been working to de-mystify the whole area of television production.

I did a column for ten years for *Writer's Digest*, written columns and articles and parts of books on television writing and what is involved with it. So here we have the opportunity, through this on-line exchange, to create a document, which will ultimately be thousands of pages long, tracking this series from the first development, to the pilot, through the series, things that go right, things that go wrong—which no one's ever done before to this extent. When we're done, there will be this extensive document, a snapshot of the entire process, available to anyone who is interested in the inner workings of a television series. It's all there, available for download, and people have been drawing upon it—I've gotten calls from university television and film department guys, saying they distributed it among their students. I heard from one producer who said that he borrowed our ideas on structuring the use of sets for his television project. That opportunity to educate and inform is an excellent reason to continue. □

SEPTEMBER • OCTOBER

PROGRAMMING SCHEDULE

DAYTIME

TIME	Monday - Friday	Saturday	Sunday
6:00	Informational	Informational	Informational
6:30			
7:00	Animation Station: Droids/Ewoks		
7:30	The Bionic Six		
8:00	Transformers		
8:30	New Adventures of Gigantor		
9:00	Lost in Space	Saturday Anime	Mad Scientists' Kids Club
9:30			TBA
10:00	Ripley's Believe It or Not		Sci-Fi Buzz
10:30			Mysteries, Magic, Miracles
11:00	Dark Shadows	Land of the Giants	Inside Space
11:30	Dark Shadows		C-Net Central
Noon	Sci-Fi Series Collection	Swamp Thing	Galactica 1980
12:30		Dracula: The Series	
1:00	Alfred Hitchcock Presents	My Secret Identity	Starman
1:30	One Step Beyond	My Secret Identity	
2:00	Night Gallery	Moonlight Matinee	UFO
2:30	Ray Bradbury Theater		
3:00	Ripley's Believe It or Not		Moonlight Matinee
3:30			
4:00	Voyagers/ Misfits of Science	Radiation Theater	
4:30			Radiation Theater
5:00	The Bionic Woman		
5:30			
6:00	The Six Million Dollar Man	TekWar	
6:30			Sci-Fi Trader

EVENING

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
7:00	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone
7:30	Tales/Darkside	Tales/Darkside	Tales/Darkside	Tales/Darkside	Tales/Darkside	Tales/Darkside	Tales/Darkside
8:00	Quantum Leap	Quantum Leap	Quantum Leap	Quantum Leap	Sci-Fi Buzz	Sci-Fi Feature	Amazing Stories
8:30					Myst/Mag/Miracles	Film	Amazing Stories
9:00	SF Series Collection*	SF Series Collection*	SF Series Collection*	SF Series Collection*	Inside Space		Alien Nation
9:30					C-Net Central		
10:00	Friday 13th: Series*	Friday 13th:Series*	Friday 13th:Series*	Friday 13th:Series*	On-line Showcase**	Max Headroom	War of the Worlds
10:30							

LATE NIGHT

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
11:00	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone
11:30	Tales/Darkside	Tales/Darkside	Tales/Darkside	Tales/Darkside	Tales/Darkside	Tales/Darkside	Tales/Darkside
Midnite	Quantum Leap	Quantum Leap	Quantum Leap	Quantum Leap	Quantum Leap	Sci-Fi Feature	Amazing Stories
12:30						Film	Amazing Stories
1:00	SF Series Collection*	SF Series Collection*	SF Series Collection*	SF Series Collection*	SF Series Collection*		Alien Nation
1:30							
2:00	Friday 13th:Series*	Friday 13th:Series*	Friday 13th:Series*	Friday 13th:Series*	Friday 13th:Series*	Max Headroom	War of the Worlds
2:30							
3:00	Informational	Informational	Informational	The Prisoner	Retro TV	Radiation Theater	One Step Beyond
3:30							Informational

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SEPTEMBER MOVIES
ON THE SCI-FI CHANNEL

SATURDAY, 9/2
2:00 p.m. Tarantula
1955, John Agar,
4:00 p.m. Island of Terror
1966, Peter Cushing
8:00 p.m. Suspiria
1977, Jessica Harper
12:00 a.m. Suspiria
1977, Jessica Harper
3:00 a.m. Creature from the Black Lagoon
1954, Richard Carlson,

SUNDAY, 9/3
3:00 p.m. The Mole People
1956, John Agar
5:00 p.m. The Monolith Monsters, 1957, Lola Albright

SATURDAY, 9/9
2:00 p.m. The Final Eye
1982, Joseph Cortese,
4:00 p.m. The Projected Man
1967, Bryant Halliday
8:00 p.m. Zardoz
1974, Sean Connery
12:00 a.m. Zardoz
1974, Sean Connery
3:00 a.m. Son of Dracula
1943, Lon Chaney Jr.,

SATURDAY, 9/16
2:00 p.m. Castle of Evil
1966, Scott Brady
4:00 p.m. Z.P.G.
1972 Oliver Reed
8:00 p.m. Official Denial
1993, Parker Stevenson
12:00 a.m. Official Denial
1993, Parker Stevenson
3:00 a.m. The Creature Walks Among Us, 1956, Jeff Morrow

SUNDAY, 9/17
3:00 p.m. Monster on the Campus, 1958, Arthur Franz
5:00 p.m. Official Denial
1993, Parker Stevenson

MONDAY, 9/18
9:00 p.m. Fantastic Voyage
1966, Raquel Welch
1:00 a.m. Fantastic Voyage
1966, Raquel Welch

TUESDAY, 9/19
9:00 p.m. Phantom Planet
1961, Francis X. Bushman
1:00 a.m. Phantom Planet
1961, Francis X. Bushman

WEDNESDAY, 9/20
9:00 p.m. The Amazing Colossal Man
1957, Glenn Langan
1:00 a.m. The Amazing Colossal Man
1957, Glenn Langan,

THURSDAY, 9/21
9:00 p.m. War of the Colossal Beast
1958 Sally Fraser
1:00 a.m. War of the Colossal Beast
1958 Sally Fraser

FRIDAY, 9/22
9:00 p.m. Dollman, 1991
1:00 a.m. Dollman, 1991

SATURDAY, 9/23
2:00 p.m. The Other, 1972
4:00 p.m. Official Denial
1993, Parker Stevenson
8:00 p.m. Iceman
1983Timothy Hutton
12:00 a.m. Iceman
1983, Timothy Hutton
3:00 a.m. The Final Eye
1982, Joseph Cortese

SUNDAY, 9/24
3:00 p.m. The Clone Master
1978, Ralph Bellamy
5:00 p.m. Tales that Witness Madness, 1973, Kim Novak

SATURDAY, 9/30
9:00 a.m. The Venus Wars (letterboxed), 1992
2:00 p.m. Shanks
1974, Marcel Marceau
4:00 p.m. Vampire at Midnight
1988, Jason Williams
8:00 p.m. The Fantasy World of Irwin Allen
1995, Documentary
12:00 a.m. The Fantasy World of Irwin Allen
1995, Documentary
3:00 a.m. Kiss of Evil
1963, Clifford Evans

OCTOBER MOVIES
ON THE SCI-FI CHANNEL

SUNDAY, 10/1
3:00 p.m. The Fantasy World of Irwin Allen
1995, Documentary
5:00 p.m. Phantasm
1979, Michael Baldwin

MONDAY, 10/2
9:00 p.m. Dracula
1931, Bela Lugosi
1:00 a.m. Dracula
1931, Bela Lugosi

TUESDAY, 10/3
9:00 p.m. Frankenstein
1931, Boris Karloff
1:00 a.m. Frankenstein
1931, Boris Karloff

WEDNESDAY, 10/4
9:00 p.m. The Mummy
1932, Boris Karloff
1:00 a.m. The Mummy
1932, Boris Karloff

THURSDAY, 10/5
9:00 p.m. The Invisible Man
1933, Claude Rains
1:00 a.m. The Invisible Man
1933, Claude Rains,

FRIDAY, 10/6
7:00 p.m. The Fantasy World of Irwin Allen
1995, Documentary
9:00 p.m. The Wolfman
1941, HLon Chaney Jr.
11:00 p.m. The Fantasy World of Irwin Allen
1995, Documentary
1:00 a.m. The Wolfman
1941, Lon Chaney Jr.

SATURDAY, 10/7
9:00 a.m. Casshan: Robot Hunter, 1992
12:00 p.m. The Fantasy World of Irwin Allen
1995, Documentary
2:00 p.m. Murders in the Zoo
1933, Lionel Atwill
3:30 p.m. Pin, 1988
8:00 p.m. Homewrecker
1992, Robby Benson
12:00 a.m. Homewrecker
1992, Robby Benson
3:00 a.m. The Snow Creature
1954, Paul Langston

SUNDAY, 10/8
3:00 p.m. My Demon Lover
1987, Scott Valentine
5:00 p.m. Homewrecker
1992, Robby Benson

MONDAY, 10/9
9:00 p.m. The Brides of Dracula, 1960, Peter Cushing
1:00 a.m. The Brides of Dracula. 1960, Peter Cushing

TUESDAY, 10/10
9:00 p.m. Curse of the Werewolf, 1961, Oliver Reed
1:00 a.m. Curse of the Werewolf, 1961, Oliver Reed

WEDNESDAY, 10/11
9:00 p.m. Phantom of the Opera, 1962, Herbert Lom
1:00 a.m. Phantom of the Opera, 1962, Herbert Lom

THURSDAY, 10/12
9:00 p.m. The Evil of Frankenstein
1964, Peter Cushing
1:00 a.m. The Evil of Frankenstein
1964, Peter Cushing

FRIDAY, 10/13
9:00 p.m. Captain Kronos: Vampire Hunter
1974, Horst Janson
11:00 p.m. Frankenstein and the Monster from Hell
1974, Peter Cushing
1:00 a.m. Captain Kronos: Vampire Hunter
1974, Horst Janson
3:00 a.m. Frankenstein and the Monster from Hell
1974, Peter Cushing

SATURDAY, 10/14
9:00 a.m. Vampire Hunter D
1991

OCTOBER MOVIES
ON THE SCI-FI CHANNEL

2:00 p.m. Let's Scare Jessica to Death, 1971
4:00 p.m. Homewrecker 1992, Robby Benson
8:00 p.m. Nosferatu, The Vampyre, 1979, Klaus Kinski
12:00 a.m. Nosferatu, The Vampyre, 1979, Klaus Kinski
3:00 a.m. Island of Terror 1961, Peter Cushing

SUNDAY, 10/15

3:00 p.m. The Devonsville Terror, 1983,
5:00 p.m. The Possession of Joel Delaney, 1972

MONDAY, 10/16

9:00 p.m. Rosemary's Baby 1968, Mia Farrow
1:00 a.m. Rosemary's Baby 1968, Mia Farrow

TUESDAY, 10/17

9:00 p.m. The Black Cat 1990, Caroline Munroe
1:00 a.m. The Black Cat 1990, Caroline Munroe

WEDNESDAY, 10/18

9:00 p.m. Suspiria 1977, Jessica Harper
1:00 a.m. Suspiria 1977, Jessica Harper

THURSDAY, 10/19

9:00 p.m. Horror Express 1972, Christopher Lee
1:00 a.m. Horror Express 1972, Christopher Lee

FRIDAY, 10/20

7:30 p.m. Universal Halloween Special, 1995
8:00 p.m. Who's Afraid of the Sci-Fi Channel, 1995, Special
9:00 p.m. The Entity 1982, Barbara Hershey
11:30 p.m. Universal Halloween Special, 1995
12:00 a.m. Who's Afraid of the Sci-Fi Channel, 1995, Special
1:00 a.m. The Entity 1982, Barbara Hershey

SATURDAY, 10/21

9:00 a.m. Lensman, 1990
2:00 p.m. The Night Walker 1964, Barbara Stanwyck
4:00 p.m. Horror Planet 1981, Judy Geeson
8:00 p.m. Heartstoppers: Horror at the Movies 1992, Documentary
12:00 a.m. Heartstoppers: Horror at the Movies 1992, Documentary
3:00 a.m. Shanks 1974, Marcel Marceau

SUNDAY, 10/22

3:00 p.m. Frankenstein and the Monster from Hell 1974, Peter Cushing
5:00 p.m. To Die For, 1989

MONDAY, 10/23

9:00 p.m. White Zombie 1932, Bela Lugosi
1:00 a.m. White Zombie 1932, Bela Lugosi

TUESDAY, 10/24

9:00 p.m. Carnival of Souls 1962, Candace Hilligoss
1:00 a.m. Carnival of Souls 1962, Candace Hilligoss

WEDNESDAY, 10/25

9:00 p.m. Night of the Living Dead, 1968, Judith O'Dea
1:00 a.m. Night of the Living Dead, 1968, Judith O'Dea

THURSDAY, 10/26

9:00 p.m. The Evil Dead 1985, Bruce Campbell
1:00 a.m. The Evil Dead 1985, Bruce Campbell

FRIDAY, 10/27

9:00 p.m. Night of the Creeps 1986, Jason Lively
1:00 a.m. Night of the Creeps 1986, Jason Lively

SATURDAY, 10/28

9:00 a.m. Demon City Shinjuku, 1992
2:00 p.m. The Night that Panicked America 1975, Paul Shenar
4:00 p.m. Ritual of Evil, 1969 Louis Jourdan
7:00 p.m. Who's Afraid of the Sci-Fi Channel 1995, Special
8:00 p.m. The Fury 1978, Kirk Douglas
10:30 p.m. Universal Halloween Special, 1995
11:00 p.m. Who's Afraid of the Sci-Fi Channel 1995, Special
12:00 a.m. The Fury 1978, Kirk Douglas
1:30 a.m. Universal Halloween Special, 1995
2:00 a.m. Who's Afraid of the Sci-Fi Channel 1995, Special
3:00 a.m. Dr. Cook's Garden 1970, Bing Crosby

SUNDAY, 10/29

11:30 a.m. Universal Halloween Special, 1995
1:00 p.m. Satan's Triangle 1975, Kim Novak
2:30 p.m. Dracula 1979, Frank Langella
5:00 p.m. The Howling 1981, Dee Wallace
7:00 p.m. Howling 6: The Freaks, 1990
9:00 p.m. The Sentinel 1977, Cristina Raines
11:00 p.m. Cat People 1982, Natassia Kinski
1:00 a.m. Night Gallery Pilot 1969, Rod Serling
3:00 a.m. Universal Halloween Special, 1995

MONDAY, 10/30

9:00 p.m. Kolchak: Crackle of Death 1973, Darren McGavin
1:00 a.m. Kolchak: Crackle of Death 1973, Darren McGavin

TUESDAY, 10/31

11:30 a.m. Universal Halloween Special, 1995
12:00 p.m. Who's Afraid of the Sci-Fi Channel 1995, Special
9:00 p.m. Kolchak: Demon and the Mummy 1973, Darren McGavin
1:00 a.m. Kolchak: Demon and the Mummy 1973, Darren McGavin

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A former TV horror host provides a wealth of movie lore—and some horrible puns.

BY LAWRENCE TUCKER

STROLLING THROUGH A LARGE MANHATTAN BOOKSTORE, a well-known horror writer stopped before a copy of John Stanley's ***Creature Features Movie Guide Strikes Again*** (Pacifica, CA: Creatures at Large Press, 460 pp, $22.50 pb). "I hate this book," she told me, "but I use it all the time."

You, too, may find yourself using it all the time; despite its faults, it's probably the most complete guide currently available to the sort of genre films—SF, horror, fantasy, and just plain weird—that *SFE* readers enjoy. The fourth expanded edition of a work that Stanley has been compiling since 1981, it contains more than 5,600 capsule reviews, nearly twice as many as its closest competitor, Michael Weldon's 1983 (and soon-to-be-updated) *Psychotronic Encyclopedia of Film*. What makes this one especially useful to collectors is that, for all relevant titles, Stanley includes the companies that have released videotape and laser disk versions, and even lists their addresses in the front.



This Island Earth's *Metalunan Mutant (pronounced Mute-Ant) is just one of thousands of creatures from Stanley's Features.*

A former horror-film host on San Francisco TV, Stanley takes justifiable pride in the fact that, unlike most other guidebooks, his is strictly "a one-man operation." He watches the movies himself and reviews them himself—though, he confides, "a lot of people wonder how it is possible [for me to do this] without ultimately suffering from brain damage or a complete physical and spiritual breakdown."

Watching all his own movies is commendable; the problem is, he doesn't always watch them very carefully. His entry on the classic cult film *Frankenhooker*, for example, includes a photo of its star, the gorgeous Patty Mullen—which has to be considered a blessing—but he describes her as the hero's sister. In truth, as anyone who saw the film should remember, she's his fiancée—and bringing her back to life, after she's been killed, is the springboard for the whole wild plot.

Writing on the Vincent Price historical thriller *House of Wax*, Stanley informs us that "the setting is turn-of-the-century Baltimore." This puzzling assertion sent me scuttling back to my own copy of the film; and I'm here to tell you that, just as I'd always assumed, it is set squarely in New York—a point that's made clear at least three times in the opening ten minutes. (Even more puzzling is the fact that Michael Weldon's encyclopedia also describes the setting as "turn-of-the-century Baltimore," and so does Stanley's 1984 edition; for all I know, the first edition may do so as well. I have no idea who started this misinformation, but dare I suggest that somebody's copying someone else?)

Finally, let's take a more obscure film, an artsy 1974 European import released here on video under the title *Primal Impulse*. Starring the beautiful Brazilian-born actress Florinda Bolkan and set in an atmospheric old hotel, it's a moody *Last Year at Marienbad* sort of thing, a study of identity, false memory, and a woman's descent into madness. Stanley gets the plot wrong, claims "Klaus Kinski stars," and never so much as mentions Bolkan. Kinski is in the film, all right—in a recurring fantasy sequence that lasts just a minute or two. It's clear that Stanley never saw the film, and that he's taken his information straight from either a catalogue listing or the video box—which, interestingly enough, distorts the plot in exactly the same way and omits all names except for "Starring Klaus Kinski."

Of course, misinformation that's vaguely in the ballpark may be better than no information at all. Stanley's one-sentence review may be misleading, but at least he *lists* the damned film, and he gets the year right, along with the name of the distributor. And it's not as if Kinski isn't in it.

Occasionally, as with any guidebook, there are mysterious omissions. In an otherwise-adequate review of *Streets of Fire*, for example, Stanley lists important cast members but leaves out the larger-than-life villain, played by Willem Dafoe. And though he includes a brief entry on Tod Browning's legendary 1927 silent *London After Midnight*, he might have mentioned that no print of the film survives, and saved us the trouble of looking for it. (Here's one film, at any rate, I *know* he didn't see.) A

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far more influential silent, the 1924 Douglas Fairbanks *Thief of Baghdad*, is not listed at all, even though it's widely available on video. (I'm pleased, at any rate, that Stanley gives the 1940 Sabu version his highest recommendation.)

Generally, however, Stanley's capsule plot summaries are longer than those in other books, and most are first-rate, including persuasive reviews of movies such as *Angel Heart, Picnic at Hanging Rock, Creature from the Black Lagoon*, and *Dr. Strangelove*. He's particularly insightful on the *Star Trek* series, the two *Terminators*, and both versions of *The Thing*, each with its own special virtues. He prefers the original *Night Must Fall* to the remake; with *1984* and *Invaders from Mars*, he (wisely, I think) prefers the remakes.

Taste is subjective; you'll find yourself agreeing with some opinions, arguing with others. Personally, I found Stanley's praise for movies such as *The Nutty Professor* ("fulfilling...clever"), *The Rocketeer* ("a gem of a Disney adventure movie...the flying sequences are superexciting...the cast is great"), and last summer's *The Shadow* ("a totally satisfying adventure") far too generous. Still, it's nice to see a guy who enjoys his work.

He also, I regret to say, enjoys making puns, and *Creature Features* is chock full of them. I used to like puns when I was young, especially in adolescent magazines like *Famous Monsters of Filmland* ("This movie is so horrifying it was never released—it escaped!"). Stanley's may have been amusing when he hosted his TV show; here they're merely embarrassing. His review of *Dr. Giggles*, for one, is mighty short on giggles: "... [Larry] Drake is over the top as the doctor who makes house calls—without being asked! If you want a second opinion, go ahead, but we urge you to see this. Now, open wide."

Of *Driller Killer*: "You could say this film is full of bit parts. And holes, especially in Nicholas St. John's script. The biggest 'bore' of all turns out to be director Abel Ferrara, who doubles as killer." (As if to make amends, Stanley hails both these men as "excellent filmmakers" in his review of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*.)

Sometimes the puns are so labored that they obscure the meaning and even affect the grammar. Of *Dr. Tarr's Torture Dungeon*, which Mexican director Juan Lopez Moctezuma based on a story of Poe's, he writes: "Avoid it like the Red Death; tell-tale signs of no heart. Call it Moctezuma's Revenge." Huh?

Maybe Stanley just has bowel trouble on the brain. Savor the following, from his otherwise well-reasoned review of *Wolfen*: "When the titular entities (mutant wolves with superintelligence) reveal themselves, the film falls faster than a diarrhetic wolf hound's doo-doo." It's rare for a man in his mid-fifties to be at once so erudite and so infantile. Still, it's not as if he didn't warn us; as he boasts on the back cover of his book,



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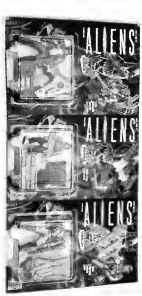
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"Although slightly crazed by the experience, he has seen more genre movies than any other living being."

The Fearmakers, *edited by John McCarty (New York: St. Martin's Press, 206 pp, $14.95 pb).*

This oversized paperback is deceptive. Its schlocky design and muddily reproduced photographs (many marred by ugly blocks of overlapping captions) suggest one of those quickie movie books that rely on familiar stills and recycled fan-magazine text. In fact, however, *The Fearmakers* is a collection of remarkably literate and informative essays tracing the history of the horror film through the careers of twenty accomplished directors, from Tod Browning to Stuart Gordon. One doesn't normally expect a book filled with photos to be this well-written, nor the photos themselves to be so well-chosen.

Seven widely published writers contributed essays; seven were written by McCarty himself. The other directors profiled are Benjamin Christensen, Roland West, James Whale, Henri-Georges Clouzot, Roger Corman, Jack Arnold, William Castle, Hammer Films' Terence Fisher and Freddie Francis, Roman Polanski, George Romero, Dario Argento, Wes Craven, Brian De Palma, Tobe Hooper, John Carpenter, David Cronenberg, and Jacques Tourneur, whose *Curse of the Demon* McCarty names as his "all-time favorite movie in the genre of fearfilm."

While all the essays are respectful and even affectionate, they are also, at times, refreshingly critical; these writers are not blind to their subjects' failures. My only quibble, in fact, is with that damned unnecessary "fearfilm," a neologism used throughout the book.

Sci Fi TV: From The Twilight Zone to Deep Space Nine, *by James Van Hise (New York: HarperPrism, 259 pp, $4.99 pb).*

This once-over-lightly history of television shows such as *Lost in Space, The Outer Limits, Star Trek, The Prisoner,* and *Quantum Leap* must have been easy for Van Hise to put together since he'd already written about many of them for Pioneer Books, a firm specializing in an-oriented publications. In fact, this mass-market paperback is a reprint of a Pioneer book from two years ago and cries out for updating; as it stands now, we're left with outmoded judgments such as this: "The series now seems incapable of rising above a certain level of mediocrity. Perhaps *The Next Generation* is winding down. Perhaps (some hope) it will revive itself when new episodes begin airing once more in early 1993."

Nonetheless, Van Hise is an old pro with a likably breezy style, even when he's filling his pages with plot summaries; and when he looks back at the programs of the past—at the popularity of *The Outer Limits* during "the sixties monster boom" and the age-old lesson of *Beauty and the Beast* ("appearances are not important")—he's never less than entertaining. □

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ON THE WEEK of September 18, the Sci-Fi Channel will present a week of "Little/Big" films, featuring such trifling fare as *The Incredible Shrinking Man* in alternate doses with such mammoth productions as *The Amazing Colossal Man*. We dedicate this month's quiz to the tall and the short of fantasy film. And, to make things just a little tougher, we've abandoned our usual "multiple choice" format. Can you name the films we've described below?

1. The mad Doctor Praetorius develops tiny artificial life forms he calls "homunculae" (the diminutive creatures are not the main attraction of this horror classic).

2. This story of a legendary sailor features a one-eyed giant who enjoys roasting his victims on a spit over a slow fire.

3. A teenage orphan battles a mysterious tall man at the cemetery who turns the dead into little slaves in another dimension.

4. A 12-year-old boy is the only person who can control a giant robot powered by the damaged brain of his dead dad.

5. The story of an Irish gent whose neighbors are so accustomed to his tall tales that none believe him when he meets the King of the Leprechauns and his tiny subjects.

6. The first feature written and directed by Oliver Stone starred Jonathan Frid (*Dark Shadows*) as a writer tormented by his own creations, including a giant (played by Henry Baker) and an evil dwarf (Herve Villechaise).

7. When a bomb test goes awry, an army colonel begins growing at the rate of 10 feet a day. The growth-spurt puts too much strain on the brain, and Colonel Manning rips the heck out of Las Vegas.

8. Ernest Schoedsack, director of *King Kong*, made this story of Doctor Thorkel, a nutty scientist who lures people to his hidden lab so he can shrink them as phase one of his plan to rule the world. One of the very few horror films of its time made in color.

9. A housewife is exposured to food additives that shrink her. Scientists out to shrink the world want to dissect her, as she and her best friend (an ape) struggle to expose the plot to the world.

10. Raquel Welch is part of the teeny-tiny crew aboard a teeny-tiny craft on a mission to laser-blast a blood clot. Concepts from this one were later borrowed for the Dennis Quaid-Martin Short feature *Innerspace*.

11. Before he directed *Apollo 13*, Ronnie Howard played "Genius," a teenager who develops a growth formula that turns the teens of his town into 30-foot giants.

12. Colonel Manning, seemingly dead at the end of #7, survived after all, though his face is horribly scarred (and he's played by a different actor). His state of mind isn't any better—this time he's tearing up Mexico.

13. A 13-inch policeman from outer space in pursuit of an alien criminal—with a bodiless head—crashlands on Earth.

14. After his escape from Devil's Island, Lionel Barrymore wears a dress and sells dolls on a Paris street corner. Only the dolls are really shrunken people who will enact his plan of revenge! By Todd Browning, the director of *Freaks* and *Dracula*.

15. While out boating, Scott Carey encounters a mysterious fog on the water, and subsequently begins shrinking! Directed by Jack Arnold and adapted by Richard Matheson from his novel.

16. One word: Munchkins.

Extra Credit: Of the above, which three were written and directed by Bert I. Gordon?

ANSWERS:

1. Bride of Frankenstein
2. The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad
3. Phantasm
4. The Colossus of New York
5. Darby O'Gill and the Little People
6. Scrooge
7. The Amazing Colossal Man
8. DC Cropes
9. The Incredible Shrinking Woman
10. Fantastic Voyage
11. Village of the Giants
12. War of the Colossal Beast
13. Dehnum
14. Freud Duff
15. The Incredible Shrinking Man
16. The Wizard of Oz

Extra Credit Question: The Amazing Colossal Man, War of the Colossal Beast and Village of the Giants.

The battle begins . . .

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Dear Ed,

I see the latest *Star Wars* hearsay has upgraded me from writer to director. While I certainly appreciate the promotion, perhaps you'd be kind enough to let me set the record straight:

1. It's true that George has expressed interest in my possibly performing screenwriting services for him on one or another of the films in the next trilogy, but whether that happens really depends on George. Right now he's working solo on the first drafts of all three films, and I imagine his needs are becoming more clearly defined as he's getting his thoughts on paper. If he's still interested in me when the time comes, and if my schedule allows, maybe it'll happen.

2. The buzz about my directing is wild speculation. I have no idea from whence it sprang, but well-meaning publications have taken it to heart and spread it around, which is a disservice to the fans and to me. (I shudder to think what the rumor mill would make of my not directing one of the next *Star Wars* films after leading everyone to believe I would.)

There you have it! It ain't much, but that's all the news that's fit to print!

Warm Regards,
Frank Darabont
Beverly Hills, CA

We were overjoyed to hear that The Shawshank Redemption *won the Humanitas award this year. Congratulations!*

With all due respect to you, and with apologies for any discomfiture caused by our reporting, we are not likely to confine our reports to what is picked up from the trades, or is released to us by studios. Nor, like the "well-meaning" publications you cite, do we base our reporting on items appearing in other SF media magazines.

We make every reasonable effort to confirm our reports, and we would be delighted to confirm our next Frank Darabont item with you or your staff, as we do with quite a few filmmakers and producers. Since we had no contact information on you, we guarded the item with the phrases "according to rumor" and "may direct." Our readers were in no way misled—and we are not responsible for the activities of other magazines.

That said, thanks for the correction.

Dear Berthe Roegger,

I loved your *Batman-TankGirl-Dredd-Casper* quiz in the June issue of SFE. However, you have to realize that if you are going to phrase your questions that broadly, you are bound to miss some possible answers.

"5. One of *Judge Dredd*'s greatest early battles was against another Judge. Name him."

How early? In the standard edition comic version of *Judge Dredd*, his battle against Judge Caligula was early on.

"10. Five men have fought crime in a Batman costume. Name them."

Aside from the five you mention, there is also Superman. He and Batman often switched costumes to fool their enemies back in *Brave and Bold*. (This is why, several universe rewrites ago, the two characters were said to be exactly the same height.)

Pedantically Yours,
James H. Hay
San Diego, CA

Berthe got nasty when we showed her your letter. "Superman isn't a man," she snapped, "He's an alien." But don't mind her—we're sure she's really flattered to be corrected by the San Diego Comic Con's trivianaster!

Dear *Sci-Fi Entertainment*,

In the new issue of your magazine, I saw mention of the cancellation of *VR.5* and *Sliders*. At the time the column was written (two days after the announcement), the writer said that there were far fewer posts on the Usenet newsgroup "alt.tv.vr5" than on "alt.tv.sliders." I suggest that you take another look. The "alt.tv.vr5" newsgroup has grown and regularly posts over 100 messages a day, with more people joining. We are actively working to bring *VR.5* back on the air.

Sincerely,
Donna L. Solomon
4230 Pleasant Villa Dr.
Arlington, TX 76016
e-mail:solomon@uta.edu

Donna, we've been keeping tabs on the growth of "the Virtual Storm" (the online movement to restore VR.5 to the air), and have even posted to the newsgroup ourselves. We wish you success in your efforts.

Dear *SFE*

In the latest issue (July - August 1995) of *SFE*, you have a mislabeled photo. On page 69, you label a photo of one of Gerry Anderson's shows as *Thunderbirds*. But it really is a photo from *Captain Scarlet and the Mysterons*.

Other than this I find your magazine to be one of the best on the market. It's written for adults, unlike the others on the newsstands.

My one complaint about the Sci-Fi Channel is the butchered episodes of *The Twilight Zone*. Also, I noticed that there were two episodes not shown, "The Encounter" with George Takei and "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge." Will these ever be shown?

Steven Jackson
sjackson@cnct.com

Most often, the Channel shows the syndication package episodes, which were edited by Viacom; the original broadcast versions are sometimes shown in the Channel's TZ *marathons.*

"The Encounter," which costarred Takei and Neville Brand, was withheld by CBS from the Viacom syndication package, most likely because of its sensitive content, as it dealt with racial issues. CBS Home Video has released this episode in its anthology package, "Treasures Of The Twilight Zone."

"Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge" was an independent short film made in France, and acquired by Serling to fill out a season; neither CBS nor Viacom ever held full rights to the film.

The Channel is in contact with the two separate rights holders of these episodes, and negotiations for cablecast rights continue.

Dear Sirs;

I enjoyed all your attention to anime in this issue. I have heard about this fascinating field for a long time, but other than the frequent showings of *Vampire Hunter D* and *Robot Carnival* on many TV outlets, I hadn't had the chance to really appreciate it until the Sci Fi Channel's "Anime Festival." Your articles provide the background to truly understand the movies.

One complaint that I have is the absence of the *Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers: The Movie*. Yes, I know it is a kids' movie, but my kids loved it. I wouldn't expect a long, in-depth article, but at least some coverage should be in order. My kids also read your magazine and learn about the wide expanse of the subject through your efforts.

Thank you again for a fine magazine. I'm probably just going to have to break down and buy a subscription.

Wil Hansen
76732,677@compuserve.com

Because of our association with the Sci-Fi Channel, we recognize that our readership has a wider age range, and the magazine is more family-oriented than most SF media magazines. For that reason, we were considering a feature on the creature designs for Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers*—it would have been a good excuse to chat up our friend John Vulich, who also works on aliens for* Babylon 5*. But in determining our editorial mix last issue, it seemed the choice was to either delay running our Gerry Anderson interview, or ignore* MMPR*. We chose the latter course. Maybe if you had written us sooner...*

We continue to look to the mail to help us determine our course for future issues. Continue sending your email to flixman@dorsai.org; paper mail goes to Sci-Fi Entertainment, 441 Carlisle Drive, Herndon, VA 22070.



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